

# **A TALE OF TWO SUBURBS:**

Earthquake recovery and civil society in Christchurch

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This study followed two similarly affected, but socio-economically disparate suburbs as residents responded to and attempted to recover from the devastating 6.3 magnitude earthquake that struck Christchurch, New Zealand, on February 22, 2011. More specifically, it focuses on the role of local churches, community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), here referred to broadly as *civil society*, in meeting the immediate needs of local residents and assisting with the longer-term recovery of each neighbourhood. Despite considerable socioeconomic differences between the two neighbourhoods, civil society in both suburbs has been vital in addressing the needs of locals in the short and long term following the earthquake. Institutions were able to utilise local knowledge of both residents and the extent of damage in the area to a) provide a swifter local response than government or civil defence and then help direct the relief these agencies provided locally; b) set up central points for distribution of supplies and information where locals would naturally gather; c) take action on what were perceived to be unmet needs; and d) act as a way of bridging locals to a variety of material, informational, and emotional resources. However the findings also support literature which indicates that other factors are also important in understanding neighbourhood recovery and the role of civil society, including: local leadership; a shared, place-based identity; the type and form of civil society organizations; social capital; and neighbourhood- and household-level indicators of relative vulnerability and inequality. The intertwining of these various factors seems to influence how these neighbourhoods have coped with and taken steps in recovering from this disaster. It is recommended that future research be directed at developing a better understanding of how this occurs. It is suggested that a model similar to Yasui's (2007) Community Vulnerability and Capacity model be developed as a useful way to approach future research in this area.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **1.** INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Introduction: Disasters and Society**
- 1.2 Civil Society**
- 1.3 Civil Society and Disaster**
  - 1.3.1 Civil Society, Vulnerability, and Disasters
  - 1.3.2 Civil Society, Neighbourhoods, and Disaster
- 1.4 The Phases of Disaster**
- 1.5 Framing the Current Study**
- 1.6 Aims and Key Questions**
- 1.7 Outline of Thesis**

## **2.** RESEARCH METHODS

- 2.1 Introduction**
- 2.2 Research Approaches to Civil Society**
- 2.3 The Research Sites**
- 2.4 Research Design and Methods**
  - 2.4.1 Qualitative Research Design
  - 2.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews
  - 2.4.3 Other Forms of Data Collection
  - 2.4.4 Sampling and recruitment
  - 2.4.5 Analysis
  - 2.4.6 Ethical considerations
- 2.5 Conclusion**

## **3.** UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSE

- 3.1 Introduction**
- 3.2 Pre-quake Civil Society in Aranui and Sumner**
  - 3.2.1 Aranui
  - 3.2.2 Sumner
  - 3.2.3 Comparison of Pre-quake Civil Society in Aranui and Sumner

### **3.3 Civil Society Response Post-quake**

#### **3.3.1 Aranui**

#### **3.3.2 Sumner**

### **3.4 Conclusion**

## **4. CIVIL SOCIETY AS A SOURCE OF POST-DISASTER SUPPORT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

### **4.2 The Role of Social Networks in Disaster Support**

### **4.3 Aranui Civil Society as a Source of Support**

#### **4.3.1 Civil Society and Unmet Needs**

### **4.4 Sumner Civil Society as a Source of Support**

### **4.5 Recipients and Reciprocity**

### **4.6 Conclusion**

## **5. CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL PARTICIPATION: MEMBERS, LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

### **5.2 Altruism, Mutual Assistance, and Civil Society Post-Disaster**

#### **5.2.1 Sumner and Aranui in comparative perspective**

### **5.3 Participation in Grassroots Civil Society in Sumner**

### **5.4 Leadership and Civil Society in Sumner**

## **6. CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

### **6.2 Summary of Research Findings**

### **6.3 Implications of Findings**

### **6.4 Limitations and Possibilities: Recommendations for Future Research**

## INTRODUCTION

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### **1.1 Introduction: Disasters and Society**

In the early morning hours of September 4, 2010, residents of the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, were shaken awake by a powerful 7.1 magnitude earthquake centred 40km west of the city (The Earthquake Commission [EQC] & GNS Science, 2010) causing widespread damage to homes, land, and infrastructure throughout the region (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority [CERA] & Tonkin and Taylor Ltd., 2011). In the months that followed, the city continued to experience repeated aftershocks, although many believed the worst of the shaking was over. Yet it was a smaller, more proximately-located 6.3 magnitude aftershock on February 22, 2011, nearly six months later, which caused the most widespread devastation to the city. It left 185 people dead and resulted in an estimated \$30 billion in damage (Fallow, 2012), making it New Zealand's second-deadliest disaster and it's costliest.

Attempts at understanding the scale and impact of a natural disaster are often approached in terms of casualties, damage to physical infrastructure, and monetary figures about estimated losses and costs. However, while the relative severity of disasters can be indicated by such measures, they do little to explain the lived experiences of people caught up in such events (Bolin & Stanford, 1998). In recent decades, social research into disasters has begun to shift focus away from the disaster 'event' and towards an understanding of disasters as being a result of how people are organised in routine, everyday life (Bolin & Stanford, 1998; Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004a). Thus framed, inequalities are seen to be a result of social structures and conditions in daily circumstances that are merely exacerbated, not created, by disaster. Moreover, disaster scholars generally acknowledge that risk and vulnerability to hazards are not evenly distributed within society (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, & Wisner, 1994; Bolin & Stanford,

1998b; Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002). Positioning disasters within the socio-political contexts in which they occur enables researchers to better understand the complexities influencing how people mitigate, respond to, and recover from such events. It also provides a unique opportunity to examine many aspects of social life that, under more normal circumstances, may be challenging to observe.

Recent research following major disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, and the 1997 earthquake that struck Kobe, Japan, indicates that the capacity of local civil society to mobilise resources and support at the local level can significantly improve a neighbourhood's ability to recover from a disaster. This study has thus followed two similarly affected, but socio-economically disparate suburbs as residents have responded to and attempted to recover from the devastating 6.3 magnitude earthquake that struck Christchurch on February 22, 2011. More specifically, it focuses on the role of local churches, community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), here referred to broadly as *civil society*, in meeting the immediate needs of local residents and assisting with the longer-term recovery of each neighbourhood. Achieving a better understanding of the innovations used by local civil society, and how and why residents engaged with civil society, provides valuable insight into the role of these groups and this type of social interaction in mitigating and responding to crises. Ultimately, this furthers awareness, both for researchers and policy-makers, about what is involved in securing positive, sustainable, and equitable outcomes for those living in these neighbourhoods in ways that foster more resilient communities.

## **1.2 Civil Society**

Although the term is far from new, modern conceptualisations of civil society have flourished since the 1970s and 1980s, with earlier applications often characterised by some kind of “voluntary, purposive association to the forces of chaos, oppression, or atomization of the time” (Edwards & Foley, 1998, p. 125). Edwards and Foley (1998) emphasise that ideas of civil society were strongly connected to the social context in which they were shaped. For example, it was in opposition to certain communist and authoritarian regimes in eastern and central Europe and in Latin America, and through their denial of their citizens' basic rights, that the concept of



civil society took shape as a means of monitoring state power and accountability, through protests, marches, demonstrations, information dissemination, and forms of associational life (Chandhoke, 2007). This theoretical stream of civil society, stemming more from resistance against tyrannical regimes, tends to view the importance of civil society as separate from government and acting as a counterbalance to state authority (Foley & Edwards, 1996) and as a way of keeping governments in check. However this view does not really encompass forms of associational life unless they are engaged in some form of resistance against government authority, and therefore does not provide any explanation for associational life that does not satisfy this condition.

Meanwhile, disaffection with the results of the welfare state and then with the more neo-liberal solutions that followed in Western Europe and other parts of the developed world in the 1970s through to the 1990s led to conceptualisations of civil society as a ‘third way’. Rather than viewing civil society as working in opposition to the state, civil society is instead viewed as a part of society independent of the state and market, with all three working in partnership as the best way to solve economic and social problems (Edwards, 2004). This conceptualisation of civil society is in popular use and in this view, civil society is used almost interchangeably with the “non-profit sector” (L. M. Salamon & Anheier, 1992) or the “voluntary sector” (Kidd, 2002). However, assuming civil society is indeed wholly separate from the market or government is also problematic, due to the variety of ways in which different organisations within the non-profit sector operate (Kidd, 2002) and the considerable overlap that often occurs between these three apparently separate sectors (Kopecky & Mudde, 2003).

Civil society remains a slippery concept, since it can encompass groups with entirely different agendas from one end of the political spectrum to the other. The term is often imbued with normative characteristics, with many seeing civil society as an essential part of a well-functioning democracy, although there is diversity of opinion in exactly how this happens. In recent years the work of Robert Putnam has popularised the concept of civil society as encompassing all associational life, regardless of its form or function. In Putnam’s (1995) view, civil society plays an essential role in building and sustaining a healthy democracy with an engaged citizenship while also developing norms of trust and reciprocity that facilitate collective

action for mutual benefit and the common good. Putnam refers to this aspect as social capital. Although this is only one of many uses of the term ‘social capital’, it is one that has become increasingly popularised by Putnam and other social scientists, and the concepts of civil society and social capital are frequently used in conjunction with one another, both in disaster literature and in other academic spheres as diverse as economics and public health.

However, some social scientists are reluctant to view all forms of civil society as inherently ‘good’, arguing that researchers and proponents of civil society should avoid falling into a ‘normative trap’ and not merely assume that all civil society is beneficial for democracy. Kopecky and Mudde (2003) suggest that ‘uncivil’ societies or groups that may have contentious politics or exclusionary practices that are not viewed as pro-democratic, such as racist or fundamentalist groups, should still be included as part of civil society in order to best understand the many forms and functions that civil society may encompass. Following Kopecky & Mudde’s (2003) conceptualisation, for the purposes of this research civil society is used as a heuristic device, broadly defined as “organized collective activities that are not part of the household, the market (or more general economic production), and the state” (p. 11). In reality, however, overlap with other ‘spheres’ may occur and should be explored.

### ***1.3 Civil Society and Disaster***

In the immediate aftermath of disaster there are multiple ways in which people both give and receive assistance, and a great deal of research tells us that civil society is generally not the first place that people turn to for support following a disaster (Haines, Hurlbert, & Beggs, 1996; Hurlbert, Beggs, & Haines, 2001; Hurlbert, Haines, & Beggs, 2000). Rather, research suggests that people often turn to kin and friends first for support in crises and following disasters (Haines, Beggs, & Hurlbert, 2002; K. Kaniasty & F. H. Norris, 2000; Shavit, Fischer, & Koresh, 1994). Yet evidence indicates that the size, density, and geographic dispersion of social networks can vary depending on different social indicators, including gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and lead to differential access to resources through social networks in the post-disaster context (Haines, et al., 1996; Hurlbert, et al., 2001). How and why people turn to

other sources of disaster assistance after an event may thus be related to the availability of support through one's social networks (Beggs, Haines, & Hurlbert, 1996). Disaster assistance can thus occur in many forms, from the institutionalized relief provided by various local and federal government agencies and disaster-specific non-governmental organizations to the more local response of organizations in disaster-affected areas, such as local NGOs, community groups, churches, emergent groups and volunteers, and finally the social networks of one's family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and others. Assistance can thus range from the individual to the group level, and can occur in both the public and private spheres.

A number of studies have focused on the potentially positive role of civil society post-disaster, particularly following major disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans and the 1995 Kobe earthquake in Japan, and a myriad of other disasters in the USA, India, Turkey, China and other countries. Despite originating from varied socio-political and cultural settings, this growing body of research indicates that work done through local civil society can strengthen disaster response and recovery in a variety of ways, from mitigating the negative effects of disaster on vulnerable populations, mobilising important resources and information, increasing the capacity for residents to act collectively on shared issues, to being a driver of social change (Airriess, Li, Leong, Chia-Chen Chen, & Keith, 2008; Aldrich, 2010; Bolin & Stanford, 1998a; Jalali, 2002; Shaw & Goda, 2004). Many researchers also acknowledge that other contextual factors are important in understanding civil society post disaster, although opinions vary and understanding into how this may occur remains largely under-researched topic. Once again, many have relied on the concept of social capital while other researchers argue that there are far more complex political and social factors which must be also be taken into account.

While it is generally recognised that larger NGOs with existing disaster response roles, such as the Red Cross, are an important source of disaster relief, research has begun to focus on how smaller, neighbourhood-based forms of civil society are mobilised following a disaster. Relative to other areas within disaster research, however, only a handful of studies have actually focused on civil society and its role at the neighbourhood level post-disaster. Nevertheless, studies, such as Yasui's (2007) study of neighbourhoods following the Kobe earthquake, indicate that

neighbourhoods may fare differently in how they respond to and recover from disaster, although research in this area is still relatively sparse.

### **1.3.1 Civil Society, Vulnerability, and Disasters**

Considering that the support available through people's social networks may be constrained by their social position, the ability to access resources other than through social networks (such as through government agencies and civil society) may be vital in some people's ability to recover from a disaster (Morrow, 1997). For example, in their study of households following Hurricane Andrew in the nineties, Hurlbert, et al. (2001) found that people in lower socioeconomic positions tended to have networks that were predominantly locally-based. Having local networks resulted in a lesser likelihood of being able to rely on these networks for post-disaster support, since other network members were similarly affected by the disaster. Meanwhile, financial constraints further complicated access to supportive resources through social networks since network members may also lack the financial resources to support others, while lack of access to transportation or travel funds also make it difficult for poorer households to look to friends or family further afield for support (Hurlbert, et al., 2001).

The resources available through one's social networks notwithstanding, social vulnerability theorists also emphasise that disadvantages are associated not only with limited financial resources, but also other limitations in personal resources. These include factors such as "health and physical ability, relevant experience, education, time, and skills" (Morrow, 1999, p. 4), a result of broader scale political and social processes that create advantage for some and disadvantage for others. Blaikie et al. (1994) define vulnerability as:

the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard. It involves a combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone's life and livelihood is put at risk by a discrete and identifiable event in nature or in society (p. 9).

Fjord (2010) argues that researchers must be cautious about equating vulnerability with 'vulnerable persons', since she argues that this shifts focus away from the social relationships and processes that produce inequitable outcomes of risk and harm and instead focuses on risk as

lying within the individuals themselves. Civil society's role, she argues, should be to mitigate the risk of harm in everyday situations, rather than focusing only on the disaster itself, pointing to how certain community-based organisations "quietly shape a revolution" by promoting the development of resilient communities rather than focusing only on the access to resources during disaster times (Fjord, 2010, p. 15).

In their study of two ethnically diverse communities following the 1994 Northridge earthquake in California, Bolin and Stanford (1998a) found that disaster relief mobilised through local NGOs and community-based organizations was particularly important for people in more vulnerable circumstances. Limited personal and financial resources encumbered their ability to cope with losses due to the disaster and yet many were not eligible for government relief either because they were not homeowners, or for a small number, due to their illegal immigrant status. Through the mobilisation of local civil society, such as NGOs, CBOs and churches, local knowledge was utilised to guide programs and assistance, partially due to many staff also being local residents. This helped direct resources to residents in ways that addressed gaps in local residents' support structures, while also attempting to address pre-existing conditions of vulnerability through community development initiatives. Even so, many participants in their study described feeling reluctant to utilize these services for various reasons because they felt they either didn't qualify for, shouldn't use, or were afraid to use the assistance. The relative success of these organizations was based on: 1) the work of local community activists in establishing trust with the predominantly Latino residents in an area with a long history of political and cultural marginalization of Latinos, and 2) flexibility of local organisations and government in funding local programs that could address emerging needs through the development of new programmes and collaborative relationships between state and organisations (Bolin & Stanford, 1998b).

Following Hurricane Katrina, a great deal of civil society mobilization occurred in cities like Austin, Texas, where existing NGOs already operating in a social service capacity supported numerous evacuees who relocated in the short and long term following the hurricane, many of whom possessed limited material and social resources (Lein, Angel, Bell, & Beausoliel, 2009). These organizations were concerned with addressing unmet needs, particularly for lower-income

families, although some researchers have noted serious limitations in the post-Katrina response due to the lack of an efficient system through which to coordinate governmental and non-governmental agencies in times of crisis, which made it difficult for NGOs to access resources to address all evacuees' immediate needs and effectively deal with longer-term resettlement issues (Green, Kleiner, & Montgomery, 2007; Lein, et al., 2009). Many such studies limited their view of civil society only to those organisations that operated as social service-based NGOs perhaps because of the large number of evacuees who never returned to New Orleans. In such cases, the research showed that effective coordination between government and civil society was still essential, particularly for those people who relocated outside New Orleans in the long-term, away from their usual social networks, jobs, and homes.

### **1.3.2 Civil Society, Neighbourhoods, and Disaster**

As the above example demonstrates, it would be inaccurate to assume that civil society interaction only takes place between residents of the same geographic area after a disaster. Indeed, even under more 'normal' circumstances many would argue that the locality in which one resides is of little consequence to our daily social interactions, through civil society or otherwise. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood or a notion of *community* as defined within spatial boundaries continues to hold the attention of researchers, politicians and policy makers, and many argue that it remains an significant part of peoples' everyday lived experience (Forrest, 2003).

The capacity for residents to self-organise and act collectively to mobilise resources and problem-solve following disasters has been noted in several studies of successful neighbourhood recovery, particularly with the neighbourhood of Mano, in Kobe, Japan and the predominantly Vietnamese neighbourhood of Village de l'est in New Orleans, among others. The presence of existing structures through local community-based organisations has been attributed as part of the relative success of these neighbourhoods, even in areas with lower economic resources (Aldrich, 2011). However, neighbourhoods with higher economic capacity may recover regardless (Javernick-Will, Jordan, & Amadei, 2012), suggesting that while the financial

resources within a neighbourhood may not be the sole factor in determining whether a neighbourhood recovers, they are nevertheless an important aspect.

Chamlee-Wright & Storr (2009) argue that the actions of civil society in response to perceived threats to the neighbourhood following a disaster can help anchor positive expectations for residents and have a self-fulfilling quality on neighbourhood recovery. In their comparison of three different New Orleans neighbourhoods heavily affected by Hurricane Katrina, they found that neighbourhoods exhibiting more successful recovery, measured by the return of residents, reopening of local businesses, and the reestablishment of local infrastructure were also those which had significant local input through grassroots-based civil society at the neighbourhood level. Residents interviewed felt that the best way to rebuild the social capacity of the neighbourhood was through their own grassroots initiatives (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). Yet studies of post-Katrina local civil society mobilization also found that participants thought this was important in conjunction with the help these neighbourhood organisations were able to mobilize through extra-local connections (Airriess, Li, Leong, Chia-Chen Chen, & Keith, 2008; Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). This suggests that the capacity for residents to collectively organise is only one aspect of how civil society's role post-disaster. How and whether these groups are able to access outside resource is another consideration.

An oft-cited example of successful neighbourhood recovery in conjunction with strong local civil society is the predominantly Vietnamese-American neighbourhood in New Orleans East, in which nearly all of the local residents within a mile radius are members of the local Mary Queen of Vietnam (MQVN) Catholic Church (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009), and whose post-Katrina recovery success has drawn the attention of numerous researchers (e.g., see Airriess, et al., 2008; Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). It was the largest local community institution and the church and its networks assisted in evacuating members to similar areas; parishioners were also continuously updated on the status of the area in the days and weeks following, which helped facilitate large numbers of residents to return en masse and begin resettling and rebuilding in the neighbourhood (Airriess, et al., 2008). Two years after Hurricane Katrina had passed, nearly 90% of the 4,000 residents in the area around the church had returned, in comparison to roughly 45% of the total New Orleans pre-Katrina population, a faster rebound than most other, more

affluent neighbourhoods that had incurred similar damage (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). Other local community organizations have formed and continue to work on local social and community development ventures (Airriess, et al., 2008). A strong, trusted local leadership; locally embedded and dense social networks with extra-local connections for resources and support; and the community identity that the Catholic church and shared ethnic background provided – all were crucial elements of this neighbourhood’s success (Airriess, et al., 2008).

In another New Orleans neighbourhood with a more diverse socio-economic and ethnic profile, existing organizations and churches began to mobilize and coordinate with each other and local residents when city plans threatened to turn the neighbourhood into a green space (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). Skills possessed by locals became important resources for local civil society, helping disseminate information in a way that was accessible for others in the area and organising campaigns on issues facing the local residents. Such organisation drew outside attention which added further to the resources available to organisations to deal with ongoing issues and through this coordinated civil society response residents were able to present a plan of their own to the city council, which was accepted into a new city plan by 2007 (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009).

Similar findings were also noted in case studies of successful neighbourhood recovery in Kobe, Japan (for example see Shaw & Goda, 2004; Tierney & Goltz, 1997). Aldrich (2011) argues that the formation of new neighbourhood-level non-profit and community-based organisations was a key predictor of successful neighbourhood recovery in Kobe and is evidence of coordination capacity in terms of long-term planning and the extent of locally embedded networks through which resources could be accessed. Yet Aldrich emphasizes that the *local* nature of these groups is key because it serves as an indicator of other social structures, such as local social networks and the ability to self-organise. While several studies indicate that the actions of local civil society post-disaster in the Kobe experience has been positively connected with effective long-term recovery, certain pre-existing social conditions, such as local leadership, a history of residents’ involvement in other types of local collective action, and existing network connections between residents seem to have been important factors in its facilitation. This indicates that



while there is potential for disaster to act as a catalyst for a more prolific civil society, there are other complex factors based on local context that may also help to explain its presence.

Trust was considered an important component for explaining the successful post-earthquake recovery of particular neighbourhoods in both Kobe, Japan and Gujarat, India where either traditions of local leadership through community programs or a history of grassroots community development fostered sustained trust among community members as well as in local leaders in ways that enabled neighbourhood residents to cooperate and mobilize effectively to recover from the impacts of the disaster (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004). In Kobe, the severity and scale of the earthquake also meant that emergency and fire services were quickly overwhelmed with the sheer number of collapsed structures, fires, and blocked roads, and most of the immediate earthquake response was carried out by spontaneous volunteering and emergent group activity (Tierney & Goltz, 1997). In a case study of one heavily affected area of the city, local residents reported that the effectiveness of locals in responding was a result of their wealth of local information and knowledge, leadership within informal and formal community-based organizations, and the availability of tools important for rescue operations (Shaw & Goda, 2004).

In the immediate post-disaster context, Stallings and Quarantelli (1985) argue that when residents form new groups, characterized by their lack of formalization and tradition, members almost always feel a sense of “we-ness” through working together as a group, and function to meet immediate needs, often in response to a “perceived need or demand which requires immediate action” (p. 98). Although many of these groups do not necessarily continue to function beyond the short-term tasks of the disaster response period, they may form the seeds of other emergent group activity later in the recovery period. For those residents involved in this later group activity, Stallings and Quarantelli (1985) found that, similarly, they formed as a result of a perception that there was a lack of recognition being given to their problem or issue, in which residents who come together to address these concerns have a) direct personal and family stakes that may be affected; or b) more generally feel that there is an actual or potential issue that may affect the community as a whole. Conflict with government authorities may later become a defining characteristic of these groups, particularly if there is a continuing belief that an issue is not being legitimately dealt with by the appropriate agencies responsible for serving the public,

although collaboration with government to work jointly on the problem(s) may also occur. Researching within the broader context of local environmental hazards, Rich, Edelstein, Hallman & Wandersman (1995) argue that adversarial groups may have difficulty in achieving consensus between residents and also point out that working against rather than in partnership with government may lead to groups becoming more reactive than productive in what they accomplish.

Some theorists and researchers also caution against broad-sweeping statements about the benefits of civil society, both in disaster contexts and otherwise, pointing to potential limitations and even the existence of exclusionary and even discriminatory forms of civil society (see Kopecky & Mudde, 2003). Following Hurricane Katrina, some researchers noted serious limitations in the post-Katrina response due to the lack of an efficient system through which to coordinate governmental and non-governmental agencies in times of crisis, which made it difficult for NGOs to access resources to address all evacuees' immediate needs and effectively deal with longer-term resettlement issues (Green, et al., 2007; Lein, et al., 2009). Bolin and Stanford (1998a) expressed similar concerns, and also recommended that "participatory and collaborative efforts between government agencies, local non-profit organisations and residents can produce innovative and context-sensitive responses to the needs of vulnerable people caught up in a disaster", but that programs aimed at recovery must also address the issues that create "chronic conditions of vulnerability"(pp. 34-35). Others have also noted that local civil society alone may not have all the resources necessary to support local residents and that ensuring the capacity of local groups to respond effectively to human crises also requires that resources are available from federal government and larger NGOs through effective coordination with these agencies (Lein, et al., 2009).

#### ***1.4 The Phases of Disaster***

Disaster recovery is regarded as only one of several phases in disaster management, and disaster research often divides disaster into different phases both pre- and post-disaster in order to categorise and analyse the impact of a disaster. Neal (1997) posits that disaster management in the United States has been particularly influenced by a report by The National Governor's

Association (1979), which categorised disasters into four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. A great deal of disaster research continues to refer to these four stages, and Neal acknowledges that these categorisations are useful heuristic devices for disaster research. He nevertheless cautions that there are definitional problems with these categorisations, since they may overlap and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Godschalk, Beatley, Berke, Brower, & Kaiser (1999) define the four phases as: *mitigation*, or the action taken far in advance to avoid or reduce the risk to humans and property from natural hazards; *preparedness*, which involves the short-term actions taken once a disaster warning has been received, such as evacuation or steps taken to temporarily protect property; *response*, referring to the post-disaster emergency relief assistance that takes place in the short-term aftermath (e.g. search and rescue, clearing debris); and finally *recovery*, which entails longer-term actions after a disaster that attempt to rebuild and restore buildings and structures in a community (p. 5). Recovery is especially complex to understand, since the term has often been applied inconsistently in disaster planning and management (Quarantelli, 1999) and earlier research tended to focus on recovery in terms of the rebuilding of physical infrastructure to pre-disaster levels. However, with the growth of studies applying the concepts of vulnerability, resilience, and social capital, all of which focus on the interplay between social processes at the individual and neighbourhood level and beyond, some researchers noted that ‘community recovery’ is an area of disaster management that remains largely underdeveloped (Yasui, 2007). Social researchers also emphasise the importance of understanding disaster recovery as a social process (Quarantelli, 1999), and thus one that is best understood embedded within local contexts and experiences (Moore, et al., 2004). Nigg (1995), for example, argues that “implicit in the sociological notion of “community recovery” is the assumption that social groups will experience the recovery process differentially” (p. 6).

Bolin and Stanford (1998b) point out that recovery which is aimed primarily at restoring pre-disaster conditions runs the risk of reproducing social processes that will continue to create advantage for some and disadvantage for others. According to Quarantelli (1999), the word recovery implies “bringing the post disaster situation to some level of acceptability. This may or may not be the same as the pre-impact level” (p. 3). For the purposes of this research, recovery

is defined as “an opportunity to achieve vulnerability reduction, and long-term community development that makes the community safer than before and less vulnerable than before” (Yasui, 2007, p. 29). In recognising that recovery is a social process, this study does not attempt to determine whether the neighbourhoods under study have ‘recovered’ per se, but rather investigates what may serve as indications of recovery in light of recent literature on community recovery. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study also follows Moore, et al.’s (2004) advice that understanding how neighbourhoods and communities recover from disasters requires in-depth, qualitative approaches that seek to understand the experience of disaster as embedded within local contexts.

### ***1.5 Framing the Current Study***

The 2011 Christchurch earthquake was a 6.3 magnitude event, centred just 10km from the densely populated city centre, which struck on a Tuesday afternoon at 12:51pm, toward the end of a busy weekday lunch hour when the city centre was filled with tens of thousands of people. While technically smaller than its predecessor, the magnitude 7.1 September 2010 quake, this quake’s proximity to the city was one of several unique factors present which contributed to a far more intense ground acceleration than that generated by any previous known quakes in New Zealand, with most of the energy released from the quake directed toward the city (GNS Science, 2011). When the dust had settled, 185 people had perished in the quake and all but 12 of these deaths occurred in the central city (New Zealand Police, 2012). As well as heavily damaging the city centre, the city’s eastern suburbs were once again among the worst-hit residential areas, just as they had been in September 2010. Around 20,000 residences were seriously damaged by liquefaction, a process through which the acceleration of ground movement essentially makes land behave as though it is liquid rather than solid (Cubrinovski, Henderson, & Bradley, 2012). The resultant land damage in some of these areas has led to a decision by government to abandon certain areas of the city, with nearly 8000 residential properties having been zoned ‘red’ and deemed economically unviable for rebuild (Gates, 2012). This study focuses specifically on Aranui and Sumner, both of which are located within the city’s east side.

### **1.5.1 Aranui**

Located approximately 6km from the city centre towards the coastal suburb of New Brighton, Aranui is flanked to the north and east by the Avon River and nestled between the suburbs of Avondale, Bexley, Wainoni, and Bromley. Three of these bordering suburbs now include large sections of the new residential red zone, an indication of the severity of earthquake damage in the area. Aranui is also considered to be one of the most socio-economically deprived areas in the city, the suburb having the lowest median income city-wide and well below the city average, the city's highest unemployment rate, and a disproportionate number of residents without formal qualifications (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). While still predominantly European, Aranui also has the highest proportion of Maori and Pacific peoples in the entire city, populations which are often younger and overrepresented in lower socioeconomic outcome categories. Both Maori and Pacific-focused initiatives at government and non-government levels were directed into the suburb following the disaster.

Liquefaction in the February earthquake was particularly severe in Aranui and flooding and road damage made some streets impassable until water subsided and silt could be cleared. Power, water and wastewater systems in the area were knocked out, as they were through many of the eastern parts of the city, with some areas of Aranui being without power for two weeks or more (Environment Canterbury Regional Council (ECAN), 2011). Damage and outages also closed nearby supermarkets and petrol stations and purchasing food, water and petrol in the first week and a half required travel to other parts of the city. Nonetheless, power was restored relatively quickly in comparison to fresh water and wastewater services, as damage to these facilities proved to be much more extensive (Stronger Christchurch Rebuild Infrastructure Team (SCIRT), n.d.), leaving many residences in the suburb without working showers and toilets for a number of months. Statistics New Zealand (2011) estimates that between 15% and 35% of Aranui dwellings had major earthquake damage rated as either 'severe', 'serious' or 'rebuild'. Even though the suburb has been green-zoned by government (meaning the area is considered suitable for residential construction), a quick drive through the neighbourhood reveals that many properties have remained vacant since the earthquake and are still awaiting demolition, reconstruction or repair.

### 1.5.2 Sumner

Located roughly 13 km south-east of the central city, Sumner is a coastal suburb tucked into a small valley, separated from adjacent suburbs by surrounding hills and coastline. With the highest median income in the city and well over the city average, Sumner also has some of the highest proportions of people with post-school qualifications (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b). A high percentage of the adult population is employed in a professional or managerial role, and the suburb has lower than average unemployment rates (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b), which combined serve to indicate that Sumner is one of the more affluent areas of the city. More than a quarter of the resident population of Sumner was born overseas, many from the UK and Ireland, indicating that it is a popular destination for people relocating to New Zealand from those areas, and the vast majority of the population is of European descent (Statistics New Zealand, 2006b).

The epicentre of the February quake was about 6km from Sumner, and the intense ground shaking caused cliffs to collapse and large boulders to tumble down the steep valley. Many homes were severely damaged, particularly among the tops of cliffs, where collapsing cliff faces partially brought down houses. Houses positioned at the base of hillsides and rocky outcrops were particularly vulnerable to falling boulders that narrowly missed some homes, crashed right through others, and resulted in one death (Masters, 2011). Several streets in the area were evacuated in the days following the quake amidst ongoing concerns about the stability of some cliff faces and hillsides and many properties in the suburb were deemed unsafe for entry in the days and weeks following either as a result of house damage, geotechnical dangers, or both. Liquefaction was not as severe in Sumner as in other eastern suburbs, but the unique issues surrounding the cliffs, hillsides, and rock fall risks have displaced many residents both permanently and temporarily. Estimates suggest that 5-15% of the neighbourhood suffered major damage in the earthquakes, proportionately less than in Aranui (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). Nevertheless some hillside areas in Sumner have been red zoned (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority [CERA], 2012). Power, water, and sewerage services also sustained heavy damage and were gradually restored over the course of the following month, although media reports of Sumner as a “ghost town” indicate that many residents may have left the area entirely, at least in the immediate aftermath (Nordqvist, 2011). Access to Sumner following the

earthquake was hindered by rock fall and bridge closure, although the local supermarket reopened within roughly four days.

## **1.6 Aims and Key Questions**

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore civil society in a post-disaster setting by looking at how local institutions within the Christchurch suburbs of Sumner and Aranui emerged and/or responded in the aftermath of the February 2011 earthquake and the role they played in meeting both the immediate needs of local residents and in the longer-term recovery of each area. A comparative approach is pursued to examine differences and similarities in how non-profit, voluntary associations and groups functioned within the unique contexts of each neighbourhood while considering the role of socio-economic inequalities in affecting local residents' needs and responses following the quakes. The earthquake has provided a unique opportunity to compare local civil society both in general and in post-disaster circumstances in light of the differences and similarities in both the form and function of organisations and groups within each neighbourhood.

In order to fulfil these aims, the following question is central to the research:

- ✿ What role has local civil society played in Sumner and Aranui in engaging with and/or supporting residents in each suburb post-quake and what might this indicate about the role of civil society in assisting with longer-term recovery in each suburb?

In order to explore the main research question the following two sub-questions are also asked:

- ✿ How did local civil society mobilise in Aranui and Sumner following the earthquake to address resident needs and issues that emerged as a result of the quake?
- ✿ How did residents of each suburb describe their engagement with local civil society after the earthquake and how did they feel about the way in which local civil society mobilised to address resident needs and issues that emerged as a result of the quake?

While it can be argued that the term ‘local’ can have arbitrary and varied meanings, for the purposes of this research, ‘local’ civil society refers to those organisations with operations based within the geographical boundaries of the suburb.

### **1.7 Outline of Thesis**

Having broadly set the context for the study and overviewed the issues, **Chapter Two** outlines the methodologies used to structure the study, collect data, and the ethical considerations involved. Following this, **Chapter Three** turns to an exploration of civil society before and after the February earthquake, beginning with a brief outline of the pre-quake civil society presence in each suburb and then describing the civil society response in each neighbourhood in the short and medium-term (about 1 ½ years post quake). **Chapter Four** specifically focuses on how residents viewed local civil society as a form of disaster relief and their motivations for choosing to use or not use the assistance or services available through local civil society initiatives. **Chapter Five** turns to other forms of resident engagement with civil society, either through volunteering, leadership, or as members of local committees and action groups and explores participants’ feelings about this type of involvement. This final chapter of findings provides a more in-depth examination of how residents’ patterns of engagement with civil society may flow on to longer-term action around ongoing recovery in each suburb. Finally, **Chapter Six** discusses the implications of these results in light of the literature, the local contexts, and what these findings indicate about the capacity of local civil society to support neighbourhoods in times of crisis. The implications of these findings are explored in terms of the development and sustainability of local civil society to address local issues both within and beyond the disaster context and recommendations for future research, both within the specific study areas as well as for neighbourhood-based civil society and disasters are made.

Despite considerable socioeconomic differences between the two neighbourhoods, civil society in both Aranui and Sumner has been vital in addressing the needs of locals in the short and long term following the earthquake. Although there were clear distinctions in how local groups mobilised in Aranui and Sumner, with the response in the former suburb primarily driven by existing local organisations and in the latter mostly by resident-based emergent groups, these



institutions were able to utilise local knowledge of both residents and the extent of damage in the area to a) provide a swifter local response than government or civil defence and then help direct the relief these agencies provided locally; b) set up central points for distribution of supplies and information where locals would naturally gather; c) take action on what were perceived to be unmet needs; and d) act as a way of bridging locals to a variety of material, informational, and emotional resources. The importance of the local knowledge and networks these organisations utilised cannot be overemphasised, since it helped to ensure that resources and information were mobilised in ways that were relevant to how locals could best access them. This was strongly tied to the different social demographics in each area and demanded a response that fit the local context. The earthquake also seemed to spark a reconfiguration of some aspects of local social relationships in both neighbourhoods by giving people a shared experience which for some people was combined with either common sets of issues or a shared local identity to incite collective action, suggesting that the disaster provided fertile ground for civil society to play a more prominent role locally; however it is also important to note that many of these new relationships were solidified by the actions of a small number of particularly engaged people and that civil society may have provided a useful means for certain social interactions. Local leadership was perhaps equally important.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

This study aimed to explore several facets of neighbourhood civil society in order to better understand how the structure and response of civil society in the wake of the earthquake was useful within the context of other available resources at residents' disposal. Beyond the individual relationships that participants described with civil society, the study also sought to step back and investigate patterns in peoples' descriptions of their engagement with, and participation in, local civil society within each neighbourhood as a way to explore what this may indicate about how these neighbourhoods recover from the earthquake and ultimately, the different roles civil society may play within these different neighbourhood contexts after the disaster. In this chapter, I outline and discuss how I addressed these study aims, as outlined in the research questions proposed in Chapter One. Drawing on a wide range of research and theories related to civil society and disasters, I explain why I chose to focus on and compare two separate neighbourhoods and justify the selection of the neighbourhoods in question. I then turn attention to my decision to conduct a qualitative study and outline the specific methods of data collection chosen for the project. Following that, I describe how my research data were analysed, and finally I discuss ethical considerations involved in my research.

### **2.2 Research Approaches to Civil Society**

Although there is already a great deal of established literature about various aspects of how people and neighbourhoods recover after a disaster, research into the role of civil society has seldom investigated how different forms of civil society may have different roles in neighbourhood recovery from a disaster. Additionally, few studies have compared the role of

civil society in socioeconomically different neighbourhoods affected by the same disaster, and those that have often did so in conjunction with use of the concept of social capital to explain the effectiveness of civil society (Aldrich, 2008; Shaw & Goda, 2004). Wishing to explore civil society more fully rather than defining its role only in relation to social capital, a concept that itself is surrounded by hazy definitions and lack of consensus about how to measure it, this study takes a broader approach to understanding the potential role of civil society. Reviewing the literature indicates that frameworks applying concepts such as community vulnerability and/or resilience tend to view the role of civil society as far more complex than simply as a function of social capital (e.g. Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Yasui, 2007). Much of this research has also emphasized the importance of understanding how civil society is embedded within local and cross-national contexts. For these reasons, the study was exploratory and descriptive in nature and rather than choosing to understand the role of civil society as it pertains to a single concept such as social capital, it approached civil society from several different angles in order to best understand the role it has played in each neighbourhood.

### **2.3 The Research Sites**

Several factors motivated the choice to focus on two separate suburbs within the more heavily-affected eastern side of the city. Firstly, focusing on suburbs within Christchurch rather than looking at Christchurch residents more generally provides the opportunity for insight into how local neighbourhood influences the availability and types of support utilised by residents, particularly when an entire neighbourhood is impacted heavily at the same time by a common cause. As discussed in Chapter One, following disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the Kobe earthquake in Japan, an increasing number of studies have focused on how some geographically-defined neighbourhoods appear to recover more successfully than others, despite being similarly affected by the same disaster (see Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009; Javernick-Will, et al., 2012; Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004).

It is clear from disaster research that economic resources are an important component in understanding neighbourhood recovery (Irazabal & Neville, 2007), although research has also indicated there may be several different pathways to recovery beyond simply economic

resources. The fact that both suburbs sustained significant damage to residences, commercial properties and infrastructure in the earthquake and yet are situated on opposite ends of the city's socioeconomic spectrum provided a unique opportunity to glean insights into how the role of civil society compared in response to the same prolonged crisis between neighbourhoods with different socioeconomic attributes. Social research on disasters emphasizes the importance of local context, and thus, comparing two suburbs and the ways in which different forms of civil society operated within them allowed for a far more in-depth exploration of civil society within different neighbourhood contexts.

## **2.4 Research Design and Methods**

### **2.4.1 Qualitative Research Design**

Many of the descriptions of experiences that were sought in relation to the research questions and the context of such experiences were not quantifiable, particularly because I was interested in exploring the meaning of social interactions through civil society. For this reason, a qualitative study design was chosen as the best fit for this study, and also because it allowed for a more nuanced and flexible approach to understanding the local contexts under study (Flick, 2007), which was especially important in light of the exploratory nature of this study. Qualitative data was also sought because of the emphasis qualitative research places on answering questions related to *how* social experiences are given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), which was not only central to the research questions chosen but also which researchers looking at the social experience of disaster emphasise as paramount (see Bolin & Stanford, 1998b). The comparative nature of this study sought to embed residents' experiences within different neighbourhood contexts, and since qualitative research considers the influence of social context in which activities and experiences occur (Banyard & Miller, 1998), this further supported the decision to carry out a qualitative study.

### **2.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

In-depth semi-structured interviews were the primary form of data collection and allowed for rich, detailed information on experiences and challenges to be described and gathered.

Interviews were with key informants from local community-based organizations, non-governmental organization, and churches, as well as with local residents. The main purpose of the key informant interviews was to gain an understanding of the structure of the organization and, where relevant, its pre-quake operations before turning to how and why the organization had mobilized after the earthquake. The purpose of the participant interviews was twofold: firstly, to explore residents' experience of the earthquake in terms of the resources and strategies they had access to and how they were used to meet their needs, and secondly, to contextualize their experiences with local civil society amongst their overall earthquake experience. If participants were involved in local civil society in some way before or after the earthquake, it was important to establish what their own experiences had been and how this was related to how they were involved in local organizations or groups. Therefore, if participants had not encountered or engaged with civil society, it was seen as equally important to explore why. This enabled a better understanding of the meaning local civil society was seen to have for residents and how this influenced their engagement with local organizations and groups and thus, allowed for greater depth of understanding about the role of civil society in each neighbourhood.

Information sought in key informant interviews and those with residents followed an interview guide (see Appendix A and B, respectively). Although the interview guides were useful for ensuring that interviews were thorough and did not stray too far off topic, following Seidman's (2006) advice, in order to allow the interviews to better explore meaning and avoid imposing the interviewer's "own interests on the experience of the participants," the guide was used cautiously rather than being strictly adhered to, to allow participants to take a more active role in the interview (p. 77). Likewise, the interviews also applied Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing model in order to gain a better depth of understanding about the topics in question. This interviewing model, which encourages research design to be adapted and changed as data is gathered, allowed for flexibility in the choices of interview questions asked as the research developed. Using this design, it was possible for questions to emerge as the study progressed as well as for questions to be adapted based on responses from earlier interviews. This research design also allowed for reflexivity to be built into the research process so that each interview provided an opportunity for reflecting on the interview design, including evaluation of which questions and topics were and were not useful and adjusting them accordingly; when necessary,

participants and key informants were contacted again to clarify or expand on topics covered in the interview.

#### **2.4.3 Other Forms of Data Collection**

Data were collected from other sources, including: informal interviews, newsletters created and distributed by local civil society, government documents, newspapers, and websites for local civil society and, when relevant, the larger organizations to which they belong. Most of this was gathered between September 2011 and August 2012. Informal interviews took place on several occasions with several people from various Aranui and Sumner organizations and government departments in the early stages of the study. While these conversations were unrecorded and do not provide concrete data that could be used for the study, they were nevertheless important for contextualizing and providing clarification and better understanding of civil society in each neighbourhood and how residents were involved.

##### **Other sources of information used in this thesis:**

- ✿ The monthly “Aranui Community Trust Newsletter”, a newsletter published by ACTIS, an Aranui-based NGO.
- ✿ The Aranui Community Trust web site (<http://www.actis.org.nz/>).
- ✿ The Sumner Community web site (<http://sumnercommunity.co.nz/>).
- ✿ Newsletters published by CanCERN (a Christchurch network of residents’ association and community group representatives).
- ✿ Internet web sites (government sites such as Statistics New Zealand and New Zealand Police for statistical information, Christchurch City Council and CERA websites for details regarding development and reconstruction plans and initiatives, various other websites operated by Sumner and Aranui civil society, etc.).
- ✿ Newspapers (The Press, The New Zealand Herald, stuff.co.nz)
- ✿ Published and unpublished studies done previously on Aranui and surrounding areas (Boyd, 2011; MacGregor, 2006).

#### **2.4.4 Sampling and Recruitment**

The total research sample for this thesis consisted of eighteen research participants (N=18). Formal and informal interviews with key informants took place, with a total of five (n=5) key informant interviews from different Aranui organisations, and four (n=4) key informant interviews from different Sumner organisations. A variety of organisations within each suburb were approached via email and phone and provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study, inviting key informants to participate in the study. Key informants were defined as being individuals with a professional or leadership role within local civil society, who may or may not have also been residents of the suburb. As such, it was not necessary for key informants to be residents, although in one (n=1) instance in Aranui, and in all four (n=4) instances in Sumner, this was the case. In such circumstances, the interview took place in two parts, first using the key informant interview guide, and second using the participant guide; although the two experiences of individuals as leaders/professionals and as residents often overlapped, this was seen as an advantage in providing greater insight into the role civil society played within the suburb in the eyes of these individuals, and the interviews were managed accordingly.

In both suburbs, organisations were asked to provide contact details for local residents who had given previous consent to be contacted regarding participation in the study, and further recruitment was done through snowball sampling of these participants. In Sumner, participant recruitment was also done through existing professional networks and further snowball sampling through these participants. Six residents from each suburb were recruited and interviewed. Residents were defined as anyone whose length of residence in the suburb had preceded the earthquake, although they did not have to be current residents, as the experience of moving out of the suburb after the earthquake was considered equally insightful. In order to reflect the socio-demographics of each suburb, a range of experiences were sought. Thus, participants varied in age from mid-20s through to 70s, and included people from a range of incomes and ethnic backgrounds (including those of Pakeha, Maori, and Pacific ethnicity). The sample also included a mixture of homeowners and renters, and included one (n=1) who lived in social housing. Those both in and out of the workforce for various reasons were also represented, including retirees (n= 3), stay-at-home (n=1) and working parents (n=4), students (n=1), and

individuals receiving a sickness (n=1) or unemployment benefit (n=1). At the time of the study, one participant from each suburb had also relocated from the suburb as a direct result of the earthquakes.

#### **2.4.5 Analysis**

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, and data was then coded and analysed. In order to ensure the systematic organization and quality of the textual data, the interviews were transcribed according to a format recommended by McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003). Field notes were also written up during and after each interview in order to gain further insight and understanding into each interview, as well as to give further reflexivity to the project.

The analysis consisted of three phases. In phase 1, two participant interviews from each suburb were selected and the Listening Guide was applied to help position the voice of the participant at the centre of analysis (Gilligan, Spencer, Wienberg, & Bertsch, 2003). The Listening Guide was a valuable analysis tool in the early stages of analysis because it also encouraged 'listening' to each transcript several times, each time focusing on a slightly different aspect of the interview (Gilligan, et al., 2003). This proved particularly useful for analyzing interviews of residents who also provided information as key informants because it helped clarify the multiple levels of experience they were speaking from at any given time during the interview. Also in line with the Listening guide, the transcript was marked and notes and summaries were made to use as the base for later interpretations (Gilligan, et al., 2003).

In phase 2, data from the interviews was coded and 'chunked' into broad categories in relation to the ways in which groups mobilised, types of support received and provided, and event descriptions. These were further grouped and regrouped into recurrent themes that emerged from the data. At this stage in the analysis, focus primarily remained on the individual experiences of participants and thematically categorizing these experiences and the descriptions of meaning they had given to different experiences after the earthquake. This level of analysis began to bridge themes within a single interview with those between different individuals,



focusing particularly on key themes such as Met and Unmet Needs, Social Networks and Support, Civil Society Involvement, Civil Society as Support Provider, etc. Each main research theme also had sub themes, for example, under the ‘civil society as support provider’ theme included: informational support, material disaster relief, mutual assistance, emotional/psychological support.

Finally, themes, or key findings, were tabled and compared both within and between suburbs to consider the similarities and differences between the two suburbs and how this was described by participants. These tables identified characteristics of local civil society, pre- and post- disaster civil society, types of involvement, and the meaning of local civil society and people’s involvement in it after the earthquake. Tabling results allowed for clearer comparison of how and why participants interacted with civil society, but most importantly, it shifted focus away from individual-level analysis to between-case analysis, comparing patterns of experiences and meanings between the two suburbs. This stage of analysis also allowed for more precise comparison of the research findings in relation to findings from other disaster literature and possible indications of disaster recovery at the neighbourhood level.

#### **2.4.6 Ethical considerations**

Steps were taken to ensure that consent to participate was voluntary, informed, anonymous, and confidential, and ethics approval was granted by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. Several other factors were also considered throughout the research process to ensure that the study was carried out with caution and in the best interests of the participants at all times.

**Personal experience:** In the months while I was conducting my fieldwork, the earthquake was an ongoing lived experience for most Christchurch residents, who were constantly reminded of the quake in a myriad of ways: through ongoing aftershocks, being surrounded by constant roadworks and buildings in various states of demolition, living in damaged homes, unresolved insurance claims, for some participants, uncertainty about the future of their homes and whether they would be able to continue living in them, and in countless other ways. Sharing stories about ‘where you were when it happened’ were commonplace and even outside the interview context people would begin to recount their experiences with little

prompting. Having personally experienced the earthquake was an advantage in many ways for me as a researcher, because it made it easier to build rapport with participants, who found it natural to be speaking about the earthquake to someone who shared the experience of the earthquake. Being a resident in the eastern suburbs both before and after the quake also helped with this rapport, since there was often a perception that residents from the eastern side of the city had experienced far more trials and tribulations from the earthquake. While my own experiences were advantageous to building trust, I was also aware that they also could potentially interfere with those being communicated to me during interviews. I managed this potential issue in two ways. Firstly, if participants asked me about my own experiences, I shared elements of my own experiences with them but quickly returned focus back to their own story. I felt it was important that participants felt there was an exchange of sorts during the interview, since it was a natural part of any conversation between people who had experienced the earthquake. Secondly, as I wrote up field notes after each interview I also reflected on how I reacted to different aspects of the interview as a practice of self-awareness and reflexivity in the research process. I was then better able to separate my own reactions from the meaning that participants were communicating to me.

**Sensitive issues and trauma:** Any discussion of earthquake experiences had the potential of bringing up sensitivities and trauma for research participants. As I was more interested in their engagement with civil society within the context of their other experiences after the earthquake, I avoided asking participants about traumatic or specific losses and found that while people were speaking about support and experiences among others in the neighbourhood and through civil society, these were usually framed in a positive way. An intentional attempt was made to frame questions within language that enabled the participant to describe themselves as active participants as a way of avoiding victimization. For example, rather than asking, “What kind of assistance did you receive from x?” I asked about more specific instances, such as, “How did you deal with access to food and water in the days after the earthquake?” I also felt it was important to end the interview on a positive note so that participants were not left feeling worse than they had when the interview had begun, so the interview usually concluded with questions that dealt with ‘lighter’ topics. After the recording device was switched off to signal the end of the interview, sharing a cup of tea and a more

informal chat was a common way for interviews to wind down from any heavier topics discussed.

**Power dynamics:** Unequal power dynamics between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ is a common topic in literature on research ethics. I was very aware that my background as a young Pakeha (of European descent), middle-class, university-educated female could be somewhat problematic, particularly for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or situations of poverty who may have felt intimidated by me. Thus, establishing some common ground at the beginning of the interview was an important way of creating an interview environment that was more equal, such as being open to sharing earthquake experiences, as mentioned earlier, was one strategy used. Also mentioned above, framing interview questions in a way that empowered rather than victimized the participant was another strategy I used that was important for managing unequal power dynamics. Also, wearing tidy but casual, simple clothes to the interview and simple gestures such as accepting an offered cup of tea or coffee or allowing participants to show me the quake damage to their homes were also ways in which I attempted to negotiate a situation with participants that felt non-threatening and comfortable.

**Benefits to participants:** Finally, it was important to me that participants, both residents and those within local civil society, felt that sharing their experiences would be beneficial in some way. Many also mentioned that they felt it was important, and even therapeutic, to share their experiences in a way they felt would be useful for the public. I emphasized that my findings would be returned to the neighbourhood by organizing presentations and feedback with local organizations after the research was concluded, and have maintained contact with organizations to ensure this is followed through with.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined and summarized the main choices I have made during the course of this study with respect to the overall design of the project and key decisions about the methods of data collection and analysis used and why. I have also explained how people and groups were selected and recruited for the study, and the ethical considerations made. Attempts were made at every stage of the study to ensure that researcher bias was limited, and the best interests of all

participants were protected at all times so the benefits of this research can be shared with those involved.

## UNDERSTANDING LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSE

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### **3.1 Introduction**

Participants in each neighbourhood engaged with civil society in different ways and the extent to which they utilized resources available through these groups also varied. However, to fully understand the context in which these resources were available and accessed in each suburb it is first necessary to explore the civil society presence within each suburb prior to the earthquakes. This is particularly important since the ways in which civil society mobilized to distribute resources and reach local residents following the earthquake began from such different origins in each suburb. Therefore the aim of this chapter is twofold: first, to provide a descriptive outline of civil society in each suburb pre-February 2011; and second, to use this basis to look at the ways in which different groups responded immediately following the earthquakes to provide disaster relief and assistance. Not only does this enhance the ability to explore the capacity and scope of different forms of civil society in each suburb in assisting with the delivery of disaster support and dealing with post-disaster issues, but it can also provide insight into how different forms of civil society may develop within varying local social backdrops and interactions.

Bolin & Stanford's (1998) research provided valuable insight into how existing local community organisations can be an important component in directing resources to more vulnerable residents who may not be eligible for formal relief, or for whom the relief packages available may still be inadequate in meeting their needs. Their research found that the local knowledge and existing social connections possessed by local civil society was vital in the success of these groups in facilitating assistance. This and other studies have also shown that disaster response is far more effective if a collaborative relationship exists between local organisations and government authorities *before* disaster strikes, because it recognizes that while local civil society may have valuable knowledge in how to direct resources quickly and effectively, they may require outside

funds and resources in order to operate, both from government and other forms of civil society (Bolin & Stanford, 1998a; Green, et al., 2007). There is evidence from disasters around the world that a great deal of the early response after disasters is instigated by local residents (Ozerdem & Jacoby, 2006), adding further support to this claim.

Despite such evidence, repeated governments continue to use a ‘command and control’ approach to disaster management, which assumes that a) there is a reduced capacity for individuals or local structures to cope, which b) leads to attempts by authorities to impose artificial structures to deal with the assumed reduced capacity, while c) distrusting that individuals and local groups can be trusted to respond in intelligent and effective ways (Russel Dynes, 2005). Dynes (2005) argues that this top-down approach fails to recognize that local civil society, in the form of both existing and emergent community organisations, can be effective in distributing information and resources to affected residents. Twigg (1999) argues that community-based organisations play an important role in disaster recovery because a) they are already rooted within the local culture and society making them b) better positioned to respond rapidly, efficiently, and fairly, c) they have the vital resources of local knowledge and expertise and d) the local organisation they reinforce builds up awareness, consciousness, and critical appraisal in ways that can help reduce people’s vulnerability. He also points to the inefficiencies that were present in the many government disaster mitigation programmes discussed by Maskrey (1989) as evidence of how top-down approaches can be greatly flawed and less successful.

Several studies in Japan found that neighbourhoods which had a history of collective organizing around community development issues or mutual assistance through local resident’s associations and other neighbourhood-based community organisations before the Kobe earthquake also had faster emergency response and more positive signs of recovery in the long-term (Aldrich, 2011; Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Shaw & Goda, 2004; Yasui, 2007). Similar findings have been noted following Hurricane Katrina (Airriess, et al., 2008; Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). Research in both Kobe and New Orleans has also found that when residents self-organise to form new groups following a disaster, it can be an important way of mobilizing resources and support in ways that promote positive recovery (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009). Stallings and Quarantelli’s (1985) study demonstrated that these emergent groups were more likely to be formed among individuals

who had worked or played together, and that they should be considered an inevitable part of what happens post-emergency.

Very few studies have looked at whether the type of civil society organisation is important in understanding how resources are mobilized in a neighbourhood after a disaster. At Johns Hopkins University, where there is ongoing research dedicated to the study of civil society, a distinction is made between different non-profit organisations according to their role (Sanders, O' Brian, Tennant, Sokolowski, & Salamon, 2008). Organisations that provide tangible services in areas such as “education, health, housing, and community development, social services and the like” are regarded as operating within a *service* capacity, while broader functions in the realm of “civic and advocacy; arts, culture, and recreation; environmental protection; and business, labour, religious, and professional representation” are referred to as *expressive* (Sanders, et al., 2008, p. 7). While it is recognized that some organisations may be engaged in both functions (L.M. Salamon, Sokolowski, & List, 2003), Sanders, et al. (2008) point out that making a distinction according to how different organisations function is useful for better understanding the different roles such groups can play.

In recent years, many welfare states around the world have seen a large shift in how NGOs receive funding, with an increased reliance on purchase-for-service contracts from the government. Some civil society theorists worry that this shift may be detrimental to how civil society operates by preventing the development of some of its potential functions, such as the expressive ones listed above. Nowland-Foreman (1998), for example, is critical of this trend because he believes that it limits the ability of the non-profit sector to function fully in civil society because it decreases flexibility in how organisations can operate. He argues that an increased demand to fulfil contractual obligations can a) limit citizen participation and leadership development, thereby reducing the ability of these organisations to facilitate a high level and quality of participation, b) thus making accountability to funders (government) more highly prioritised than the accountability to members or clients; resulting in c) organisations being viewed less as autonomous entities and more as vehicles for providing public services and enacting government policy, reducing their political legitimacy; and finally, d) that focus on measurable service outputs will take away from more developmental tasks such as network

building, advocacy, and other important civil society functions (p. 120). While the actual actions of organisations may not necessarily fall to this extreme, it is useful to consider these concerns in light of how organisations reliant on government funding mobilised after the earthquake in comparison to other forms of civil society.

This chapter is structured into two main sections. In the first section, I explore the structure and function of pre-quake civil society in Aranui and Sumner, examining each suburb separately before discussing them in comparative perspective. The second half of this chapter looks at how organisations responded, and in some instances, emerged after the earthquake. Based on interviews with key individuals within each organisation, this section investigates how civil society in each suburb was able to access resources, paying attention to explanations for the choices made in how and why to coordinate local response, as well as changes within how organisations have operated in the longer-term since the earthquake.

### ***3.2 Pre-quake Civil Society in Aranui and Sumner***

#### **3.2.1 Aranui**

Aranui has had a plethora of more than thirty civil society organisations based in or near the suburb for a number of years, including at least six churches of various Christian denominations, a rugby league club, a marae (a traditional Maori meeting-place), and nearly twenty different non-profit social and health service providers operating from local facilities. While the majority of organisations in the area provide some sort of social or health service or have a charitable function, many also functioned in some sort of expressive capacity, including the local Rugby League club, many of the church-run groups, and the local marae. Some groups also functioned in both capacities, with examples including several local churches, normally considered expressive, that also had targeted social service programs.

Reflecting some of the ethnic diversity in the area, several organisations and churches had either a Kaupapa Maori or Pacific framework, with a variety of cultural, religious, and social welfare and health functions. One church ran Sunday services with a Maori perspective, while at least two local churches had a Samoan-based congregation. Meanwhile, the Nga Hau e Wha National



Marae was a hub for different Maori cultural and ceremonial activities and was used as a base for many different trusts and societies that provided Maori-based education services, cultural activities, and youth and social services aimed at the Maori community in Christchurch and the surrounding areas. At least three other locally-based groups ran programs focused on various Maori cultural activities. One local NGO offered mental health, counselling, health, and youth services within a Kaupapa Maori framework. Another non-profit organisation that works specifically with Maori, although not based locally, operated once a week from a local community development organisation responsible for running a Ministry of Social Development initiative called Heartland Services. A similar health and social service provider with a Pacific focus also operated weekly services through Heartland Services, while a youth service for Samoan youth was also run in the area.

Many of the health and social service providers in the area seemed targeted at addressing the relatively poor social outcomes that have defined the area for years, and thus most of the programs were specifically aimed at improving such outcomes in areas of health and social welfare. It is also worth noting that many of the organisations operating primarily within a service capacity in Aranui are reliant on government funding, often including a combination of Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Christchurch City Council (CCC) funding, although many church-run programs are independently supported. Thus, most of these organisations had existing relationships with government and church-based networks that extended far beyond the suburb itself. Also, although much of the work is Aranui-based, many of these services also aim to work with people throughout the eastern suburbs rather than confining their work only to Aranui residents.

The type of expertise and skills required for many of these services means that most people within the organisations are employed professionally in various roles, although volunteers are involved in several of the organisations as well in some capacity. Both volunteers and working professionals alike within the various non-profit organisations and church-based community outreach services live not just within Aranui, but are spread throughout the city, so many of these local organisations are not necessarily managed and/or operated solely or even predominantly by local residents. Also, although much of the work is Aranui-based, many of these services also

aim to work with people throughout the eastern suburbs rather than confining their work only to Aranui residents.

One organisation in particular has a strong community development focus. The Aranui Community Trust (ACTIS), which also manages Heartland Services, has extensive relationships both with government and non-government social and health service providers that offer programs through the initiative. Set up initially as a joint initiative between the city council and Housing New Zealand, the government housing corporation, ACTIS is now an independent non-profit organisation, its operations, spanning more than a decade, are aimed at addressing needs within the area. Community consultations in the form of with local Pacific and Maori leaders as well as general community meetings were held to engage with local residents and ensure they were able to voice what they felt was needed to better support and revitalize the suburb. These consultations have helped guide various projects, such as the redevelopment of local social housing units, better information and assistance with access to health care locally, and the management of the Heartland Services program.

However, while ACTIS has many social service roles, the organisation also has more expressive functions such as the planning of an annual local family festival and, since 2002, they act as the local residents' association. The Trust also distributes a monthly newsletter to each household, which includes information about services available at the trust, local social events, health advice, and information about other local programs and how and where to access them or become involved. Following the September 2010 earthquake, a funding initiative from the MSD saw the Trust hire an earthquake support coordinator to assist locals with accessing information and support in dealing with quake-related issues. Its location next to the local park, rugby fields, the community centre, another social service-based NGO, shops, and a medical practice aimed at providing affordable medical care have made this area a natural hub of local activity. Many social housing units are also within close proximity of this block of shops.

### **3.2.2 Sumner**

Civil society in Sumner prior to the earthquakes was also diverse and extensive. Unlike the predominantly service-based functions of many Aranui organisations, however, civil society

groups in Sumner had almost entirely expressive functions and were mostly comprised of groups based on pursuits in the arts, culture, sport, and other recreational activities. Of the more than thirty groups that had facilities based in Sumner pre-quake, only about five organisations were directed at providing a service in the area. This included a youth trust that ran government-approved and funded after-school programs, a Plunket office providing infant health services, a surf-lifesaving club, a rescue boat service, and a volunteer fire brigade. Groups that met to participate in some form of leisure pursuit comprised the vast majority of existing groups, many of which have had a long history in the suburb dating back as far as the early settlement of Christchurch, and included a rugby club, an art society, a silver band, a running club, a theatre group, and a historical society, among others. There were also three churches in Sumner, whose church halls were often rented out for use by other local groups although unlike Aranui, these churches did not appear to have been involved in many social or youth outreach services.

Likely due to having far less representation from service-based civil society organisations in Sumner compared to their Aranui counterparts, many of these organisations were far less dependent on government funding, being largely organized and funded privately, and in many cases depending on annual fundraisers, group membership fees, and corporate sponsorship. Smaller groups, made up of only a small number of members, had virtually no operating costs and would rent a hall for a couple of hours each month, while other organisations had a large membership and extensive, well-maintained facilities, showing great diversity in the size and range of local civil society. In addition to these differences in funding, these groups were also largely managed and operated by local volunteers, rather than through the largely professional base that many Aranui organisations had. Again, this was likely due to differences in the service versus expressive functions dominating the civil society makeup in each neighbourhood.

The Sumner Residents' Association (SRA) existed prior to the quake, although it did not appear to play a prominent role locally and served mainly to deal with incoming submissions from city council that required some form of community consultation. Some Sumner participants felt that the residents' association did not have a clear role in supporting the neighbourhood, and decision-making processes did not often include consultation with other residents beyond the existing members of the association. One participant who was also a member of the SRA

reported that the association in essence had their ‘wrists slapped’ by the local volunteer fire brigade at the annual general meeting following the September earthquake for inaction in providing support to local residents in the wake of that earthquake.

### **3.2.3 Comparison of Pre-quake Civil Society in Aranui and Sumner**

Despite the fact that civil society in both neighbourhoods was comprised of groups with some form of expressive function, the starkest difference between the two neighbourhoods is the extent to which each was so strongly represented in one particular capacity. The majority of civil society organisations in Aranui provided a social welfare and health service in comparison to Sumner’s sporting and leisure groups. The proliferation of service organisations in Aranui is likely indicative of the social demographics in the area, which have drawn the attention of government and non-profit groups aimed at improving social and health-related outcomes in a neighbourhood that has long-been defined by outsiders as a ‘poor’. In comparison, the relative lack of these types of social service and health organisations in Sumner is perhaps in part a reflection of the suburbs’ relative wealth: as an area with one of the highest median incomes and lowest unemployment rates, it is perhaps not all that surprising that Sumner has not garnered the same interest by social welfare and health service-based non-profit organisations. The expressive functions of the majority of Sumner civil society groups also aligns with the trend in New Zealand for having a relatively high percentage of non-profit groups involved in these capacities, in particular sporting, cultural, and recreational associations (Sanders, et al., 2008). Sanders et al. (2008) explain that the proliferation of such organisations dates back to early settlement in New Zealand, and it is possible that, as an older suburb of Christchurch, the area has a longer history of these types of associations which are still visible in today.

## **3.3 Civil Society Response Post-quake**

### **3.3.1 Aranui**

Early response in Aranui was mostly ad-hoc and driven by existing service-based organisations and churches, several of which were located at or had access to hubs of local activity where

people began to gather, and there were many examples of these groups mobilising in response to incoming resources that required some sort of coordinated distribution. Although many local organisations were forced to close their doors the day of the earthquake in order to clean up, assess the safety of their buildings and to allow staff to attend to their own families and homes, many of those who worked or volunteered at local organisations and churches made plans to arrive early the next day and begin assisting with local disaster relief. For example, donations of food began to arrive in Aranui the day after the earthquake by truck, helicopter, and plane from around the country, partially due to the reputation of the suburb as a lower-income area and being designated by outside groups and individuals as a target for assistance. Yet local leadership by those within existing civil society groups and on local boards, in combination with the access these individuals had to neighbourhood facilities was extremely effective in ensuring the distribution of incoming supplies was coordinated and systematic. The manager of one such organisation describes how supplies started to arrive, prompting them to organize and distribute them without even knowing the source of the donations:

the food started arriving from the helicopters 'cos there was one here the night before. That's the whole reason we were here because people weren't- they were just being greedy, so then we came in, the food came in. I'd organized, the night before, [for] people to meet me here to truck the food in from the helicopter in to here [tables set up on the footpath in front of their offices]. Then the trucks started arriving from God knows where. People pulling up with trailers of water, Watties (Interviewer: And they knew to come here?) They just heard. I don't know how they heard.

As a result, this became an impromptu site for distribution of food and emergency supplies that continued to arrive over the course of the week following the earthquake as well as a meeting place for updates on the status of local amenities and utilities.

Incoming material supplies also began to arrive through the existing networks of local churches and organisations, whose network connections with people and organisations from outside the disaster-affected area led to further material assistance arriving the day following the quake. The Salvation Army was given support through their head office to offer 400 hot meals a day at the Aranui Salvation Army offices. Meanwhile, another church in the suburb had nearly two tonnes of food donated from a North Island school, which led to the establishment of another spontaneous food distribution centre at the Aranui Primary School, distributing food to roughly

3000 people per day at the peak of its operations in the first week. The existing relationship between the church and the school, due to the church operating a trust responsible for running after-school programmes at the school, gave them access to the school buildings to use as the distribution centre.

Existing networks between local civil society and extra-local civil society not only helped draw donations of food and emergency supplies into the suburb, it also made it possible for local groups to link in with these extra-local non-profit organisations to expand the services offered locally. In particular, church networks enabled some of the local churches to open their doors to well-known Christian disaster relief agencies as well as a plethora of skilled volunteers in various trades to provide further local disaster assistance. The Salvation Army head office was contacted by various organisations and their Aranui offices became host to volunteers from other non-profit groups who circulated the area going door-to-door distributing supplies. The local Anglican church brought in skilled volunteers from around the country who were able to assist people with emergency repairs. Habitat for Humanity renovated existing houses at the Baptist church for their volunteers to stay and operate out of. Financial donations from the Rotary Club were administered by one church to provide grants for those encountering financial difficulties as a result of the earthquake who may not have qualified for other forms of assistance adequate in meeting their needs. Meanwhile, the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) and Save the Children became involved with local civil society organisations and began to run programs and services targeted at affected youth and families.

Networks between local civil society and government agencies also served to keep both the city council and government informed. Aranui organisations that had existing relationships with government agencies were contacted and visited by government agencies to update officials on the status of people in the suburb. This type of communication between local civil society and government led to the establishment of a Recovery Assistance Centre in the local community centre adjacent to ACTIS, which brought further support from various government agencies and non-profit groups at a time when electronic communication and road transport were severely limited. Some groups nevertheless voiced dissatisfaction in some of their dealings with Civil Defence and felt that poor logistics and leadership from Civil Defence resulted in some less-

affected areas receiving faster attention. For example, one organisation was frustrated with what they saw as inadequacies in coordination and distribution of things like portable toilets: “We didn’t get the amenities that we should’ve got. The logistics, in terms of where things went, was not fantastic.” Another service provider found it difficult to establish lines of communication with government, frustrated that they had to call the main city council help line in order to speak to someone.

A small study of non-profit groups in the eastern suburbs commissioned after the earthquake also found that many groups felt it was often a one-way line of communication, where information was being given to government by organisations but not always vice versa (Wylaars, 2011). These findings suggest that where relationships with city council or government agencies already existed, there was some collaboration around how to meet needs in the area. Conversely, where those relationships did not exist, some groups felt that consultation was not prioritized and a command-and-control approach prevailed. Although one service provider in Aranui described seeking to build relationships with Civil Defence after the earthquake, they worried that Civil Defence would not change their processes in consultation with local groups: “We won’t be any different. There’s nothing that’s changed here. No one’s approached us, only ourselves being ready.”

Despite such comments, collaboration between different local civil society organisations and government agencies did develop more over time. At first, little coordination existed between the multitude of groups and volunteers working within the suburb, and two key informants expressed concern about the efficiency of early relief efforts in reaching all those in need. Virtually no systems were in place to record and share what kind of support was being provided by different groups or who they had contacted, and thus there was no way of knowing if organisations may have been doubling up on one another or whether certain areas were being overlooked. A meeting was called, inviting all government agencies and groups involved in earthquake support in Aranui to meet at the ACTIS offices. This expanded into a fortnightly gathering where groups began to share information on a regular basis, and many started collaborating on the development of longer-term earthquake support programs. These meetings also became a useful way of referring clients amongst one another as groups became more aware

of the different types of support residents could access from different groups. This initiative, known as the Aranui Hub meetings, was a turning point for how many local organisations interacted with each other, because even though some groups had existing working relationships with one another, key informants from several different groups expressed a noticeable change in the quality of local relationships and interactions between local civil society groups.

Two key informants also spoke of how the earthquake broke down barriers that they felt had existed before the quake in terms of local organisations communicating and working with one another. They also acknowledged that while the earthquake may have instigated improved cooperation and communication between local organisations, it was through the initiative and skills of local organisations that these improvements were possible, as opposed to through government:

We're better off because that Hub group was formed, but that's not from any direction from anyone, that's because we used our own heads. But our area, I won't say it'll be okay, but we'll definitely be better. We'll know what we're doing.

*(Jessica, organisation B)*

[The earthquake] pulled the majority of us all together to work as one. I mean after all we'd all suffered and we're all in the same boat. Some of us just had a bit more skill and experience to be able to deliver out to the community and to make things a bit easier on people.

*(Teresa, organisation E)*

The Hub meetings have also helped local groups establish new programs and services that may not have been as accessible were it not for the networking capability that the meetings provided; groups that had not previously had a close working relationship began to support each other and coordinate in new ways. Examples include a local health care provider teaming up with a larger international NGO to provide parenting programs and the ACTIS offices receiving funding from another non-profit organisation, through a connection made through one of the local churches attending Hub meetings, to renovate previously unused office space and turn it into an earthquake support coordination centre. Brenda, a local NGO-based social worker, felt the Hub had helped her establish better working relationships with important government agencies in



ways that allowed her support her clients better because of the existing networks between some government agencies and other Hub members.

Although most of the services operating in Aranui were not aimed at any particular ethnic group, existing Maori and Pacific service providers in the city continued to operate. The Nga Hau E Wha National Marae became a hub of local earthquake relief activity. Maori Wardens from other parts of the country also had a local presence in Aranui, as did representatives from Ngai Tahu, the local iwi, in an attempt to connect with Maori residents. The Pacific Hub, a Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs initiative, was also established through ACTIS, a connection made possible due to existing contacts between ACTIS and government agencies. But after several months the influx of non-local organisations and volunteers had largely dropped away. While the existing non-profit organisations and churches continued to function in many of their pre-quake roles, they also described adjusting their operations to what they felt were pertinent needs in the post-quake environment. For example, heating became an issue for many quake-damaged homes, particularly for low-income households who could not afford repairs or escalated heating costs in homes made drafter by the earthquake. Local groups distributed heating and blankets and helped people link in with available grants through government programs and other NGOs to help cover heating costs or speed up necessary repairs. At least three local service providers received government funding to create new jobs within the organisation by hiring earthquake support coordinators or social workers dedicated to providing assistance with a wide variety of emerging needs.

Despite the complexities of addressing the various health and welfare issues that emerged in the area following the quakes, many organisations did not feel like their role within the suburb had changed drastically. Since many organisations were aimed at providing health and social services prior to the earthquake, many felt that subsuming earthquake support was part of their existing role within the neighbourhood; their function was always to support the neighbourhood, and the earthquake did not change that role:

...We just went to work like we normally would. I've seen new people through the door, but actually it was just kind of like business as usual and if we had shut the doors and gone, the community would've been worried... It was just the way we do things anyway. We had to react to our community and be there for them.

*(Jessica, organisation B)*

Another organisation, making a similar remark, also pointed to the importance of others within their organisational network as important for helping deliver this support after the earthquake, as well as experience from the previous major earthquake having helped give them valuable knowledge and understanding in how to respond effectively:

I think we've been doing the same thing on a much smaller scale, so in a way we knew what was needed, knew what to do - we'd already had our practice run so to speak, so we just scaled it up with the help of our other colleagues.

*(Paul, organisation A)*

It is clear that the civil society earthquake response in Aranui was driven by organisations that already had some sort of identified support role within the neighbourhood prior to the earthquake, whether this was through the provision of services or through local churches. Although responses were largely uncoordinated to begin with, many organisations and groups became involved in the local Hub meetings, which have continued to provide an avenue through which local organisations share knowledge, network, and coordinate with one another in ways that had largely not occurred before the earthquake. This type of innovation has seen a wide range of earthquake-related supports available within the neighbourhood become more incorporated, and has even led to an expansion of longer-term services by some groups.

### **3.3.2 Sumner**

Unlike Aranui, Sumner's pre-existing civil society did not, for the most part, guide the earthquake response. Although there were already many civil society groups in Sumner, only the volunteer fire brigade was involved in early earthquake response, and it was three or more days following the earthquake before others became involved in some sort of collective response. Even the Sumner Residents Association initially steered clear of offering any form of post-earthquake support. Fire brigade volunteers addressed local emergency needs and locals arrived at the fire station in search of information, but otherwise there was very little initial response in the suburb to assist local residents with accessing food, water, or information from relevant government agencies such as city council or civil defence.

In response to the perceived lack of organized relief available in the neighbourhood, two participants described approaching the volunteer fire department offices offering to volunteer in some way, feeling that there was a need for a more coordinated local earthquake response. The fire department acted to put the two residents in contact with one another and provided keys to a local hall. Through this informal exchange a local hub began to operate, and as one key informant described it, those involved in the hub were unsure of whether there would be any demand for such a facility or not, nor did they have supplies to distribute:

Participant: We didn't have anything it was just basically a question.

Interviewer: So you opened the doors...

Participant: Yeah I mean civil defence wasn't doing anything in Sumner or Redcliffs and I think, you know, we kind of realized that all it needed was just a central place. A place where we could...people could come and then everyone can put together and share whatever information or resources they have...

*(Lily, Hub volunteer)*

This initiative quickly evolved when the day following the establishment of the Hub an evacuation notice was given to residents on a nearby hillside, who were directed by the fire department to seek accommodation through the newly established hub. The question of whether there was a need for the Hub was quickly answered as evacuated residents began to arrive, and although the Hub was never used as an evacuation facility, it acted as a point through which locals were able to connect with each other to find accommodation and share resources. Hundreds of local residents also turned up to a community meeting arranged soon after by the Hub, which was advertised on homemade posters throughout the neighbourhood and included updates given by the local fire chief and police. From thereon, regular meetings acted as a form of information dissemination and quickly began to include representatives from civil defence, city council officials and engineers, a local MP and others able to provide information to residents about the situation before electricity was restored. Despite being an impromptu, emergent establishment with no formal organisational status, the Hub became the base for earthquake response in the suburb, with the help of the fire department and police. While attempting to access supplies, existing network connections were initially used as a Hub volunteer contacted their employer, a large nation-wide company, who was willing to donate analogue phones and bottled water to the Hub.

Networks also grew from the Hub in two ways. Firstly, through the local fire brigade the Hub was able to connect to formal agencies and organisations outside the suburb such as civil defence, city council and Red Cross, who they were steered towards to acquire supplies and information. It is likely that the backing of the local fire brigade also helped give legitimacy to the Hub as they contacted various agencies and organisations and indeed, the Hub soon acquired civil defence status, which allowed them to access supplies and information more readily. The second way that networks expanded occurred on a far more neighbourhood level, because as residents arrived at the Hub many also become more involved in its operation. The number of volunteers grew and a great deal of resource-sharing occurred and the Hub began to function as a mutual-aid group, with many people utilizing the Hub for information and resources and then volunteering time or donating supplies. As this occurred, residents who had other existing local network connections began to funnel information into the Hub about people needing help with emergency repairs, elderly requiring care, or those who had certain skills useful for assisting others, and the network of residents making contact with the Hub expanded quickly, something one volunteer described as a pivotal part of the Hub's operations:

After a while there were people coming in that had a lot of information. People that were involved in the school or the resident's association. People who had more information. And so then they'd start to feed in information and then it just kind of, you know, explodes out. People start making contact with other people. So once we had a doctor come in, then...we just started making lists. Elderly people, lists of people who had certain resources. I was very much involved in just getting information and giving information to people and organizing more volunteers, because after a few days people stopped saying, you know, how can you help me and started saying how can I help?

*(Lily, Hub volunteer)*

Existing local networks through residents involved in businesses, institutions, and local groups thus became an important source of information, skills and resources and allowed the Hub to expand in its functions.

The Hub not only acted as site where people could seek earthquake support, but became a place where local networks could converge. It also enabled residents to share resources and information to help each other. The skill base of Sumner's population likely helped a great deal, since among those who volunteered time towards various Hub initiatives were residents with a

diverse range of skills and professions, including nurses, doctors, teachers, psychologists, builders, glaziers, construction workers, and people with civil defence training, all of whom were able to offer specialized support to residents who made contact with the Hub. At different times the Hub used these local skills and resources to operate a school and children's day programs, a care and home visitation program for local elderly, an information centre, a counselling service, a shower facility, a distribution centre for donated household items, an evacuation centre, a drop-in centre, and a place for seeking help from skilled trades people to assist with repairs. At a time when many businesses were closed, transportation was hampered by damaged roads, and many services were not operational, this improvised form of civil society provided an opportunity for local residents to access and share resources and skills, many of which were locally accessible without relying heavily on non-local resources.

In a sense, the earthquake acted as a catalyst for the formation of new forms of local civil society and a reconfiguration of some existing groups, in particular, the Sumner Residents Association. By nature of the Hub having a physical location in the suburb where a large number of people gathered for community meetings in the immediate days after the quake, an opportunity was taken to enlist those attending to become more involved in local groups, both relating to quake support and special interests. The community meetings were not only a way of delivering information and updates to residents about the status of services, available assistance, and addressing issues and questions relating to the quake, but they were also used as an opportunity to recruit people to become involved in emerging groups where people had common interests or could offer relevant skills. By taking advantage of this opportunity, several new community groups were formed around specific goals and issues, both quake and non-quake related.

However the need for the Hub to have a physical location soon diminished and emerging groups became independent of the Hub while a website was soon established under the auspices of the Sumner Community Group (SCG) to, in essence, replace the Hub in its physical location and provide an online hub of information about earthquake support and various local groups and initiatives. The Sumner Community Group aimed to take the enthusiasm with which local residents had embraced the Hub and expand it further to support the suburb beyond post-

earthquake relief, with some participants acknowledging that the earthquake was the catalyst for the expansion of local activity:

It just energized people and made them think, in a nutshell, there was an absolute need to work together. And upon being able to reflect on that after two or three weeks the decision was made to do something to capture all that energy. Because there's so much good will and volunteer effort that came out I think people sort of realized that it was just so effective what people could achieve when they work together like that, and that [it] was just sort of silly not to continue it in some way or another. But I think, in short, it released a whole lot of energy which people converted into more community-oriented activities. And I guess a lot of what the Sumner Community Group concept is, is just trying to harness that, channel it. And that's what the groups are, basically, is people were interested in continuing to do and be involved in activities that are beneficial for the community.

*(Michael, Hub volunteer)*

It wasn't just about the earthquake it was more about riding that wave of community spirit and taking it into the future no matter what was gonna happen, whether there was more earthquakes, or whatever.

*(Lily, Hub volunteer)*

With the increased interest in local community group involvement, an influx of new members joined the existing Sumner Resident's Association (SRA), bringing a different vision for the association and incorporating the new Sumner Community Group into the SRA's role. Many changes were made to the committee in the elections following the earthquake and new members were nominated and voted onto the committee, many of whom were involved in establishing other local groups post-earthquake. The association also expanded its functions to run the Sumner Community website, provide information and support to other local organisations on accessing funding, and has appointed a part-time community development coordinator who also provides earthquake information and support.

A mosaic of community groups were formed targeting different projects and issues relating to the long-term recovery and redevelopment of Sumner. Tapping into locally-embedded resources, these groups have relied on the wealth of skills and experience of residents within the suburb to volunteer their time and expertise to projects focused on a wide range of interests aimed at revitalizing and improving the suburb, from local environment, support for local business, organisation of community events, and the redevelopment of Sumner's public spaces.

Virtually all of the groups established since the earthquake have been funded and run by residents, and, in some cases, have taken a more vocal position in decisions affecting local residents. Most notable in this regard was the opposition by residents to city council's efforts to take control of the redevelopment of Sumner's public and commercial spaces. The Sumner Urban Design Group, comprised of local architects and project managers, provided a legitimate avenue in which to resist the council's intentions, and after months of deliberation and consultation, Sumner has become the first and only suburb in the city to have a 'community-led' Master Plan, designed by the Urban Design Group. Meanwhile, a joint advisory group was appointed comprised of Sumner representatives from four different local community groups, elected council officials and council officers to assist with local consultations and collaboration with government. Consequently, the Sumner Master Plan was approved by city council in October 2012 to go out for public comment.

Some groups formed specifically as a way of circulating information more efficiently for people who found themselves in similar situations as a result of the quake. One group, for example, was organized by people whose homes had been deemed unsafe, forcing residents to live elsewhere until official decisions were made about land or insurance. The use of email lists and community meetings with CERA and other authorities offered residents a direct line of communication to voice concerns and advocate to those involved in the decision-making process. In addition to the community groups that emerged in Sumner around common interests, community revitalization, or quake-related issues, several new and existing community groups have looked at supporting residents in future disasters and crises by maintaining networks of communication between residents, civil defence, and local volunteers, developing disaster response plans, maintaining a community watch for safety and security, and collecting and storing important resources for disasters. While the Community Watch already existed, the Sumner Street Coordinators and the Disaster Response Group have also been established, having maintained a record of the information gained by the Hub operation.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Exploring the post-disaster civil society response in Aranui and Sumner reveals that groups in both suburbs demonstrated a great deal of capacity in reaching out to support locals in a variety of different ways. Despite differences in the origins, pre-quake functions (where applicable) and structure of civil society groups in each neighbourhood, there are many similarities in how groups responded in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, although as more time passed some differences became evident. In Aranui, where many groups were already focused on supporting the local area with social and health-based services providing earthquake support was seen as merely an extension of the extant role, and work in these areas continues. In Sumner, an increasing awareness that these types of local support structures needed to be better planned and implemented has led to an emergence of new civil society groups that have taken on these roles. These findings support Dynes' (2005) proposition that existing local organisations will continue to operate and take on new roles without necessarily changing their structure or basic functions. Particularly for the service-based organisations in Aranui this certainly appeared to be the case, and the response of the volunteer fire brigade in Sumner would also seem to support this. Organisations that already had a role and identity in supporting the health and welfare of the neighbourhood continued to function in that aspect after the earthquake, regardless of whether they had primarily service or expressive functions.

In both areas, the early response to the earthquake resulted in a more closely knit local civil society than had existed previously, and resource-sharing has extended out to the benefit of residents. However, socio-economic differences are evident in the origin of these resources, since the extended networks of Aranui organisations helped to bring important resources into the area during a time of need, while in Sumner many people recognised that there were already many existing resources through the skills and personal resources of local residents. This aligns well with Bolin & Stanford's (1998a) findings about the importance of linking organisations to funding and extra-local resources, particularly for areas with greater conditions of vulnerability. It also supports Twigg's (1999) argument about the value of local knowledge in disaster response.



Despite these different origins, civil society in both suburbs used local knowledge to help make resources more visible for residents and the potential for distributing these resources effectively has become better established through local civil society initiatives. Civil society in both neighbourhoods also responded swiftly after the earthquake, before government or civil defence had established any sort of relief operations in each suburb. The chapters which follow now turn to the experiences of local residents in interacting with, receiving support from, and becoming involved with local civil society to explore how the mobilization of these groups fits into the experiences of those living in each suburb.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AS A SOURCE OF POST-DISASTER SUPPORT**

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### **4.1 Introduction**

Having compared and explored the basis of the civil society response in Aranui and Sumner and the different origins and structures of the organizations and groups involved, this next chapter turns to an exploration of the ways in which local residents used local civil society for support after the earthquake. Few studies have considered whether the structure and form of local civil society has had any influence on how residents become involved in local civil society after a disaster. Instead, most studies have chosen to look either at how service-based organizations provided support for those in more vulnerable circumstances (e.g. Green, et al., 2007) or they have focused on participation through grassroots-style collective action and how civil society became a basis for mutual assistance between residents in the neighbourhood (e.g. Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009; Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004).

Within community development and public health literature, conceptualizations such as ‘community competence’ and ‘community capacity’ frame civil society within broader frameworks of the types of participation that residents engage with, with an eye to how such interactions empower participants in meaningful ways (see Brown & Kulig, 1996/97; Goodman, et al., 1998). In their review of literature across several different disciplines, Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum (2008) posit that “local people must be engaged meaningfully in every step of the mitigation process,” including post-disaster decision-making and problem-solving (p. 143). Their proposed framework for understanding community resilience as a strategy for disaster readiness therefore includes descriptions of resident participation commonly used in public health research that have seldom been applied within disaster literature. Yasui’s (2007) application of a community vulnerability and community

capacity framework to explore recovery in two Kobe neighbourhoods is a rare example of applying similar theories in understanding disaster recovery on a neighbourhood scale.

Despite clear differences in the configuration of civil society in each neighbourhood, residents in both areas often described local civil society response as a significant part of the support available to locals in comparison to that of the government and there were not always clearly demarcated differences in the quality of relationships residents had with civil society between the two suburbs. However, due to gaps in the literature comparing the ways in which residents have engaged with civil society *as well as* comparing and contextualising this within the different functions of local civil society, the exploration of this is spread over two chapters. Chapter 4 aims to investigate how and why participants sought or accepted the support available from local civil society and contextualize it within their own descriptions of their needs after the earthquake and how they were or were not met in various ways. This will help to shed light on the efficacy of how civil society was mobilized in relation to the residents' own perceptions.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I briefly look at the role of social networks as a source of support for participants in both suburbs. It is generally acknowledged that kin and friendship networks are the first place most people turn to for assistance during crises, and I investigate how the assistance available through participants' social networks is related to how they interacted with civil society. Secondly, I look at major themes that emerged from residents' experiences in Aranui and then in Sumner. The discussion examines how similarities and differences between the two neighbourhoods relate to the way in which civil society is organized while also recognizing how circumstances such as housing status, financial resources, social supports, legal entitlements, and housing situation played a part in understanding their experiences with civil society post-quake. In doing so, this chapter also serves as a foundation for understanding later interactions with civil society as they are explored in Chapter Five, and what this may indicate about other types of engagement with civil society as they relate to longer-term recovery.

#### **4.2 The Role of Social Networks in Disaster Support**

For participants in both suburbs, civil society support did not override family and friend networks as the first point of contact for assistance immediately following the quake. This is an important consideration because whether resources are available through one's social networks may be an important deciding factor in whether people seek support through more formal avenues (Kaniasty & Norris, 1995). As has been mentioned earlier, social networks also play a role in understanding vulnerability and resilience at both individual and neighbourhood levels, since several U.S studies have shown that minorities and people with lower incomes or less education tend to receive less support, being hindered by their social position (Kaniasty & Norris, 1995).

Conversely, research in Japan, India, and New Orleans has also shown that neighbourhoods with tightly-knit social networks have also shown high levels of mutual assistance, in spite of low socioeconomic resources (Airriess, et al., 2008; Aldrich, 2011; Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004). In most cases, researchers have used the concept of social capital to explain the availability of resources through social networks. Several disaster researchers have argued that local initiatives, such as those done through local community organizations, function best to support effective disaster response and recovery when they draw on, improve, and protect existing supportive social networks (Russel Dynes, 2005; Norris, et al., 2008).

Participants described making contact with those in their close social networks and immediate geographic proximity; people at home checked in on neighbours, those with children went to their schools; however, family and friends were described as their first priority, and the first place they would turn to for support.

[My nephew] made sure to get all the family together, 'cos we all go to James's.  
Everyone will go where [my sister] is.

*(Anne, Aranui resident)*

Definitely my folks were really good. I knew that when I got in a tight spot I  
could ask them...you know, that was always my first port of call, really.

*(Daniel, Sumner resident)*

This was particularly true in the first few days following the quake when many participants had evacuated their homes at least temporarily, since many participants described staying with either family or friends for a number of days or having family come to stay with them. These findings are consistent with past research regarding how kin and friendship networks predominate as sources of assistance in disaster contexts (Kaniasty & Norris, 2000).

In Aranui, those who did not rely on support from civil society described being able to cope because they had access to food, transportation, and adequate housing through their social networks and their own financial resources. Having somewhere to stay, either for short or extended periods of time was important in that it allowed people to leave the more heavily-affected parts of the city. For Glenda, “being able to go where I went”, to stay with another family member in a suburb on the opposite end of the city, was the most significant support she received, especially since she was able to go there repeatedly as large earthquakes cut power and caused further damage on several occasions throughout the first year following the February quake. Likewise, for Teresa, staying with family just outside the city not only meant they didn’t need to rely on food support through civil society, but she also saw it as important for her children’s well-being:

It was important to actually get them out of the area for a considerable amount of time and we went to [a nearby town], where you couldn’t really feel much of the ground moving and that was a help for the kids, to kind of get that sense of safety back in their lives.

Family and friendship networks were thus paramount for many Aranui participants and they did not tend to rely on civil society assistance if they felt they had a supportive relationship with friends and family. While Anne did not necessarily have a large stock of food and supplies in her own house, like others who described having family networks that were mutually supportive, she did not feel it was necessary to use the local distribution centres since the resources that were shared amongst her and her extended family network were sufficient in meeting their immediate needs: “We didn’t need to take from the places, ‘cos we didn’t need stuff”. However, while shops were closed and roads were difficult to travel on, having quick, easy access to food and

supplies through local civil society was a convenience for some, which may also explain why those participants who did not leave Aranui accepted material support in this form.

Similarly, in Sumner, a perception of a having strong, mutually supportive relationship between family and friends ensured that many participants felt they were able to meet each others' needs through these networks:

We are just always there for each other. You know, we just love each other, really. And [if] anyone needs help you don't think twice about giving it, whether it's your bed or your coat or your car or whatever. You just...we're family, we just, you know, [my husband's] family are hugely close to my family, are hugely close to me. My family are hugely close to [my husband]. We are a really good network of help.

*(Vicki, Sumner resident)*

This was particularly significant for those in Sumner who had lost their homes as a result of the quake because these links were a source of emotional support and mutual help, material and financial assistance, and much-needed housing when their own homes were red-stickered and accommodation was in short supply. Even in the extreme circumstances of longer-term relocation, such as that experienced by Daniel and his family over the course of more than a year following the earthquake, more than six different sources of accommodation were accessed using family and friendship networks, and with a great deal of this accommodation being free, even the Red Cross relocation grants were not utilized. In short, many support needs were met because strong bonds between family and friends meant that these participants did not feel the need to seek support from outside these networks. This was evident among participants in both suburbs, and these households tended to rely less on civil society support after the earthquake.

Not all networks were equally supportive, however, and there were participants in both neighbourhoods who described tensions and differences between themselves and other family members that sometimes impinged on the quality of support available within the relationship. Participants who had local family members and friends who were not coping as well with the earthquake or whose homes had experienced a great deal of damage were sometimes required more support than they reciprocated, and as a result these network connections were not a source of support. In her study of families affected by Hurricane Andrew, Morrow (1997) found that

most people in her study did not receive help from local kin and suggested that could have been due to local kin also having been impacted by the disaster. In Aranui and Sumner, on the other hand, there is evidence both to the contrary and in support of this. Perhaps this was due to the nature of earthquake damage in the city, with some suburbs experiencing only mild damage in comparison to other areas.

Nevertheless, it highlights an important aspect of how the structure of social networks can affect the assistance people receive following a disaster, since the networks one may typically rely on for support may be unable to provide it. Therefore, the ability to access resources through other means may be very important for people recovering from a disaster (Morrow, 1997), and this may be particularly true for people who have locally-based networks or lack the means to access those further away geographically. In Aranui, for example, those who described less supportive networks also sought more post-earthquake assistance through local civil society, particularly to help meet material and, sometimes, emotional needs. In contrast, many Sumner participants described having a wealth of available supplies to meet material needs and the ability to stock up on further supplies or leave the quake affected area, regardless of whether they relied on social support through their networks or not.

#### **4.3 Aranui Civil Society as a Source of Support**

For about half of the participants in Aranui, the support available through civil society was helpful in meeting some of their basic needs after the earthquake, although not necessarily essential. However, the visibility of volunteers and street-level presence in Aranui was important for some participants because it made them feel like support was readily available if they needed it. Referred to in social support literature as *perceived support*, Chamlee-Wright (2008) argues that the mobilization of civil society after a disaster can be an important signalling effect that “increases the perceived benefits of committing to the long-term recovery process” (p. 624) and can have a self-fulfilling effect on recovery.

Speaking about one of the local churches that sent volunteers knocking on doors on her street, Glenda felt “they were just here when we needed them, really, and that was the most important

part of it – I mean if I wanted food and things like that, well, I'd only had to ask". Stephanie also felt there was a lot of support available through civil society as a result of these organizations going door-to-door and on the streets in the neighbourhood, "it was just incredible, the help. You'll never forget it with the earthquake of just how it came together, like how much help was around". Common among many of the participants in Aranui, there was a feeling that a wealth of emergency aid was available in the neighbourhood soon after the earthquake and virtually all participants accepted some form of assistance early on by volunteers or workers not only from local NGOs and churches, but from other groups and volunteers that had flooded into the suburb. This early support from various groups in the suburb, in terms of distributing emergency food and supplies, was appreciated by participants, such as John, who was touched by how many groups were circulating and offering assistance: "How they all came, all combined and getting to help out, that was marvellous really".

Some participants did not differentiate between the early support available through government versus that which was mobilized by non-government organizations, since the local recovery assistance centre had a variety of government and non-government agencies. Nevertheless, others were highly critical of the level of government assistance available in comparison to that available through local civil society, feeling that local churches and organizations provided much more meaningful assistance and attention than they received from government relief. For John and Doris, the discovery that they were uninsured made them ineligible for many of the formal financial assistance programs provided by the government. John felt let down by the government: "since the house is not insured they don't want to know us". He and his wife thought that the assistance they received through local organizations was far more significant: "they have mainly done everything really. They're the biggest help, not the government." Glenda was also disappointed by the government response in the neighbourhood and felt that it was the combination of neighbours and local organizations that supported those in her street:

If it wasn't for the church and the people in the street we would've had nothing. We would've had no contact. Absolutely nothing. I mean the Maori Wardens, okay, they had a lot to do as well. And they supplied the water and if you wanted to talk, you could do that. I know that's what the church does but there should've been appearances or phone calls or some contact with people in authority, people who had... oh I don't know, it just didn't work out. And that's what made me so



very disappointed. I thought, well, if we never had our little niche here, we would've had nothing.

Some residents described how simply being in a visible area drew relief workers to them to distribute supplies. For Sina, much of her family was not in Christchurch at the time of the earthquake, and while many of Sina's friends stayed with their extended family, Sina and her partner spent the first week living in a tent with their children in a large open space on the main road through the suburb because they were reluctant to return to their house. Camped out with several other local families who also chose to avoid their homes after the quake, food was brought to them even though they did not actively seek it themselves:

It was awesome. People kept coming, you know, gave us stuff, like food-wise, and the army came and delivered us food [laughing]. It was good, they said it's good, because they know where to go? 'Cos people normally would just stay in their houses and things like that and it's hard for them to get there and so they just kept coming...

*(Sina, Aranui resident)*

However, once Sina and her family returned to their home, they found that this support was less forthcoming, although they did not expect anything further: "I really didn't worry about it. I always feel maybe, you know, there are other people a lot worse than us so maybe they will assist them first, then us, so it's all good to me." Teresa, on the other hand, was worried that some areas in Aranui were getting more support and focus from civil society in comparison to households in other, less visible parts of the suburb, although she felt this changed and local organizations have now grown in their ability to support the neighbourhood:

We felt that this side of Aranui did get left? And we weren't seeing the support turn up? But things grow over time and, yeah, it's a lot better now. Everyone's more aware now than they were probably back then.

Having a presence on the street as well as through a variety of different locations around the suburb, including at several local churches, the primary school, the community centre, and at organization offices, may have been an instrumental part of why Aranui residents described having chance encounters with many different groups either while residents were walking around the neighbourhood or because volunteers came knocking on their door. Aside from volunteers

walking door to door, participants were only aware of relief being distributed through centres that were either close to their house, or because they had some sort of previous connection with these places before the earthquake. Those who temporarily relocated to stay with friends or family and began to return to their homes in the days and weeks following also had multiple encounters with volunteers and workers from both local organizations and churches as well as from other groups who had travelled to the area to provide assistance. While particular organizations became significant sources of support for some participants, no single civil society organisation stood out as having provided the majority of support that Aranui participants received more generally. Instead, participants' descriptions reinforce much of what was established in Chapter Three: that a plethora of local and extra local organizations responded in kind to address local needs. This also bolsters one of Norris, et al.'s (2008) recommendations, that "pre-existing organizational networks and relationships are the key to rapidly mobilizing emergency and ongoing support services for disaster survivors" (p. 143), since we know from Chapter Three that the presence of such a large number of support services was a result of such existing networks and relationships.

Some participants described feeling reluctant about accepting support through civil society because they did not like to feel that they were 'taking' rather than giving. For Teresa, who put a great deal of time and energy into supporting others in the neighbourhood through her work and through volunteering, accepting support from these places made her feel uncomfortable, despite admitting that it may have been helpful:

I was more the supporter of others. There were times where yeah, we could've done with the support but didn't do it because I was more the person that was always giving for others and didn't kind of want to do that for myself. It felt just a wee bit strange to do that? When you're always in a role of supporting everybody else it just seemed to defeat the purpose by giving to yourself, or asking for yourself. The only thing I think I did do was apply to [the Ngai Tahu fund], 'cos we were financially stretched, having to travel [across town] over to the east everyday. I applied for their grant for petrol and that was granted.

Others, like Glenda, preferred not to seek this type of support even though they appreciated that the help was available: "I won't ask. I'm too independent. I like people to think I'm fine, even though I know I'm not. But that's just the way I am". Nevertheless, she did accept offers of support through a local church on a few occasions when they came to her house and offered to

help clean up the house after the quake. The church also provided her with important emotional support. John and Doris were not able to wholly rely on their relatively small network of friends and family for support and found the food and food vouchers available through the local recovery assistance centre helpful while shops were closed and transportation was limited by road damage. They accepted offered donations and actively sought this support by visiting the local recovery assistance centre, although they pointed out that “once it all got up and running again well, we didn’t need it”. The above comments suggest that these participants either did not need or wish to rely on this material aid for any extended time period. Social support research shows that formal assistance is often the last place people will turn to for support, although those in more vulnerable circumstances are more likely to accept this support because of limitations in the support available through other sources (Beggs, et al., 1996). This is explored more thoroughly later in this chapter.

Some participants had a connection with a local church or NGO that was providing earthquake assistance in the suburb. This not only helped to bridge some participants to what in some cases was much needed support, but it did so in a way that eased some of the reluctance they had in accepting this kind of assistance. For example, John periodically volunteered through a local organisation because he had friends who were members. He accepted some assistance available through this organisation because his friends were able to convince him that his past volunteer work justified it: “[our friends] said you guys help out in the community”. Having friends who were involved in local civil society relief efforts meant that John was also able to avoid having to ask directly for help, something he was not comfortable with doing:

I’m not one that will go out into the community and go I want this and I want that and I want that the other thing? [My friends] try and seem to know what I want [laughs] so [my friend] organizes everything.

While some participants may not have had this same opportunity, the multitude of organizations that mobilized within the suburb helped to connect local residents to available support. Meanwhile, existing relationships with some local groups, either through personal network connections or through past support experiences, and the physical presence of volunteers and workers throughout the suburb provided another avenue for breaking down potential barriers to

potentially valuable assistance, particularly for those who, for various reasons, were more vulnerable to the negative effects of the disaster.

#### **4.3.1 Civil Society and Unmet Needs**

Bolin and Stanford's (1998b) research following the Northridge earthquake found that civil society was important for addressing 'unmet needs', and the term is applied here to address the circumstances surrounding a few Aranui participants for whom the support relationship with civil society was much more prominent. For these participants, the support provided by local churches and organizations and incoming groups did, in fact, become quite a significant. Not only were they financially impacted by the earthquake, but pre-existing circumstances meant they lacked either the personal resources or supportive social networks to manage as easily as others may have. While staying with her partner's family in a nearby suburb tensions between Stephanie and the family came to a point where she decided she could no longer stay with them, and she made the decision to move back to her house in Aranui despite being without power, running water, or any working cooking equipment. The availability of food support became even more important and necessary:

At that time we not having power as well, you know, it helped. Well I mean you may as well go for the food that you didn't need to cook, because I had nothing. I mean at [my partner's family's] they had a bunch but I had absolutely nothing on me 'cos we went back to [our house] for a couple of days when I needed to get out. And it made...it was really hard, sorting out what to cook.

For her, assistance available through local organizations helped fill in a gap in her support network when she was not longer comfortable staying with her partner's family, with whom she already had a tenuous relationship. This was further exacerbated by financial constraints due to her partner being on a sickness benefit.

While participants were able to access resources through their social networks of friends and family, at the same time they described having relatively small social networks compared to other participants in the study, often comprised of only a few individuals:

“I hadn't had many friends.” (*Stephanie, Aranui resident*)

“I didn’t have all the contacts I should’ve had.” (*Glenda, Aranui resident*)

“[My cousin] mixes with more with the family than I do. I’m not...with family.”  
(*John, Aranui resident*)

Sometimes family relationships were already strained before the earthquake, and although support was available through these relationships, civil society actually became a more significant source of support:

I actually got a lot of help. I think the family, definitely the family came together. But it was just the neighbourhoods, the community I found I got more help from. You know, maybe because I wasn’t close to [my partner’s] family. I mean, don’t get me wrong we all helped each other at the start, but it was more the community, like going down to this church...

(*Stephanie, Aranui resident*)

Workers and volunteers on streets and knocking on doors were also helpful in channelling important resources and support to less well-connected participants. Some of the most meaningful support was not actively sought out by participants, but was offered when they were approached on the street or in their residences. When a chance encounter on the street with some volunteers from a local charity resulted in receiving financial assistance, Stephanie was incredibly appreciative and found it quite helpful at a time when they had been struggling with their living situation as a result of the earthquake:

Can’t say thank you enough to them. I remember it was really hard trying to get a house. We didn’t get a house, but out of their help, I got glasses for my boy. I put a little bit of that for bond for this place from that money. It was unreal. And that topped it. The help you got from that was just amazing. So [they] really came to the party and it was so funny ‘cos I never rung them, I never asked for anything.

The continuing assistance some Aranui participants received through local organizations became central to their coping with losses suffered from the earthquake. Although their circumstances were varied, the earthquake had compounded aspects of their living situation that had made them more vulnerable to being more heavily impacted by the earthquake. In particular, this was exacerbated by the financial constraints of living on low, fixed incomes and, for more elderly

participants, constraints in their physical mobility. The impact of the earthquake resulted in new issues for these participants to cope with, such as the discovery their house was uninsured, being evicted from the house they were renting because of earthquake damage, or being psychologically traumatized by the experience of the earthquake. Local civil society helped bridge them to important resources that either they had been reluctant to access, were unaware of, or had not realized they qualified for. While it did not necessarily replace the support available through their social networks, it was useful for these participants in supplementing the material and informational resources they had access to through other means.

Even so, support for those who were not eligible for government assistance did not reach everybody. Not being a homeowner complicated the access to formal government support for increased heating costs to quake damaged homes, and Sina did not qualify for formal government grants because she lacked the necessary paperwork and it was difficult to reach her landlord. Even though she had connections with local organizations, she continued to struggle financially without further assistance: “we needed help, we never got it”. Also, one potential avenue for support through civil society disappeared when virtually all of Sina’s church congregation, made up of Pacific families, left the city and moved elsewhere soon after the quake. Sina described how many of these families were pressured by worried family members from outside Christchurch to move elsewhere following the quake. This draws attention to the possibility that not all civil society groups acted or had the capacity to mobilize following the earthquake because of how the earthquake impacted its members. For Sina, this was a particularly hard blow, since it also meant that many friends moved away in the process as well. Unlike the Mary Queen of Vietnam Catholic Church community in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, where the blend of a common church and ethnic identity alongside local and non-local networks helped to rebuild the neighbourhood, the influence of non-local network connections, particularly extra-local extended family, overrode that of the local church, despite the bonds of ethnicity, religion, and even friendship that the church provided. The ultimate result of this was the dispersal of its membership. It also highlights the importance of considering ethnicity as an element in understanding the relevance of local civil society.

#### **4.4 Sumner Civil Society as a Source of Support**

Sumner residents, in contrast to those in Aranui, did not necessarily notice a great deal of support mobilized in the suburb initially after the quake, calling the suburb ‘a ghost town’, with some participants feeling the neighbourhood was somewhat ignored or neglected in comparison to other parts of the city in the first few days after the quake:

I recall hearing about a lot of support being given to the eastern areas. You know, out Brighton way and Aranui and so forth, and I don’t recall any of that sort of support coming to Sumner. It was almost like, ‘oh they can look after themselves out there’.

*(Douglas, Sumner resident)*

Originally, we were completely overlooked. And being that we were quite an isolated community especially since the bridge was gone, I think quite soon after we were allowed to bring light cars across – um – we were quite frustrated because then we’re not getting the information and things and the support that even other communities are getting.

*(Lily, Sumner resident)*

However, after the formation of ‘the hub’ several days on from the quake, nearly all the participants eventually visited it in the weeks following. The local volunteer fire department was also viewed by some participants as an early source of information and support. Participants described learning of its existence through local mailbox drops and signs posted in high profile areas around the suburb by local residents who volunteered to form and run the operation. One participant also attributed learning about the hub as being a result of the nature of local networks in Sumner: “everyone kind of just knew and word of mouth in Sumner, everyone knows everyone, you just went to the hub”.

Rather than the tangible or material support frequently described by those in Aranui, Sumner participants more often talked about going to the hub to access information and updates, since community meetings were held there immediately after it was formed. Those who attended these meetings found them useful in the days before power and water were restored to the neighbourhood, but none of the participants actually sought out further support for themselves through the hub. Like many of those in Aranui, this was often because they felt that they were able to cope adequately without the need for additional help outside of what was available through their own resources or through their family or friends.

In some cases, it was also because they felt there were others who had a greater need for this type of support than they did. Despite feeling like the early relief effort directed at Sumner was not as extensive as it was in other quake-affected suburbs, Douglas did not expect any support from civil society:

Well, I just felt that we could cope. We had what we needed. We're a lot luckier than a lot of other people so as far as I was concerned I'd rather see any support go to the people that were more needy. You know, we survived alright.

*(Douglas, Sumner resident)*

These sentiments were echoed among most of the other Sumner participants. Others, like Vicki, felt that her family still had many resources available to them, despite extensive damage to their home and incurring significant financial and material losses due to the earthquake: "we've both got really good jobs and we were insured, so that was good". These circumstances provided Vicki's household with the financial ability to replace lost items and deal with the costs of house damage and living expenses while they were displaced from their home. Meanwhile, their social networks provided further material support: "We had to go buy a lot of things to sort of keep us going but then family came to the party" and "people gave us bits and pieces". For the Sumner participants who lost their homes as a result of the quake, the Red Cross grants were also described as a valuable source of help, but the use of civil society for material or financial assistance was otherwise not pursued. Instead, many participants, like Daniel, described having adequate supplies that met their needs: "we were pretty well self-sufficient".

This, however, did not mean that civil society was not used by participants in Sumner as a source of support, particularly for those who were unable to live in their homes because of quake damage and pending land zoning decisions. These participants became more involved with local civil society as a means of staying informed about the status of their homes and also because it provided a link between these participants and others from outside the neighbourhood who could provide information, and to whom they could voice concerns and issues to. The local Member of Parliament, for example, became involved in some of these meetings, which was important for Vicki because she felt that it provided more opportunity for giving a larger voice to issues that were relevant to local residents who had lost their homes:



I'd have to say when we had our community street meetings, we've had two now to keep us informed as to what is happening with regards to the rockfall, Ruth was at both meetings there offering her support. Just her presence made you think that, you know, that there were extra people that were out there that were going to take your plight a wee bit further afield than just the streets of Sumner.

Online mailing lists and the development of a website to access relevant information and announce upcoming meetings were also mentioned as useful sources of information for some of these residents. Once power and water were restored, the use of email lists and this website by civil society groups was a common way for residents to stay informed.

Sumner residents believed the hub was an important part of the local disaster response and saw it as a useful way for residents to access additional help if it was required, even if, like Douglas, they didn't utilize it themselves: "I don't know but I'm guessing that there was ample support for people down there. I mean people put a lot of effort into making sure that people were supported that needed support". There was also a feeling among some of the participants that Sumner had a wealth of resources that could be useful for assisting local residents following the quake, and that the hub and what grew out of that initiative provided an avenue for tapping into these resources and making them more openly available. While having a physical location was a part of this, use of the Internet for communicating and spreading information at the local level was also recognized as a valuable initiative that was highly useful for making local resources more visible:

From that hub they've set up an email network and there are lots of emails to-ing and fro-ing to make sure that everyone needed help and it was great. That alerted us to the funds that we applied for, to where you could get extra water if you needed it, to where you could get, um, even one family in Sumner opened up their garage and you could drop off sofas, chairs, whatever, to people who were relocating, couldn't get into their homes, that sort of thing. So it just made all the local knowledge visible through that email network, which was great.

*(Vicki, Sumner resident)*

The Sumner Community Website that was established after the earthquake helped inform some participants about resources available through other organizations, such as the Red Cross relocation grants that Vicki and others utilized. The relative success of this form of communication, however, rests on the ability of a large number of residents to have access to email, computers, and the Internet on a regular basis. In the wealthier suburb of Sumner, this

access may be commonplace, while in Aranui, it is less so, and only two Aranui participants had access to the Internet from home, in comparison to all those from Sumner.

While the hub was the centre of local disaster response, some also saw it as only the beginning in a movement to harness what was perceived to be a high level of capacity among local residents to look after local needs:

Chris: It was a focal point, and then a sort of awakening, I think, in a lot of people about how you've been doing in your community [laughs]. And we all had an amazing range of skills. They were in hobbies or professions or just interests, so, probably the huge amount of capacity to look after ourselves. So why wouldn't we do that more?

Interviewer: Do you think that any community has that? Or is it something that's unique to Sumner?

Chris: Oh it's unique to Sumner. We're a high level of strength.

*(Chris, Sumner participant)*

The perception of several participants that there was a wealth of resources available within the suburb is significant, because it denotes a sense of autonomy after the disaster that, for some, extended out to the neighbourhood level in the view that by mobilizing their collective resources the suburb's basic needs could largely be met.

Nevertheless, the material aid that was distributed, while helpful, was not necessarily the most meaningful support people received, nor was it vital for those with a support network they could access or who had adequate personal resources to meet their basic needs while awaiting services to return.

#### **4.5 Recipients and Reciprocity**

It is worth noting that participants in both suburbs expressed a desire to reciprocate any assistance they received from local civil society organizations after the earthquake. In Aranui, it instigated some participants to become more involved in local groups than they had been previous to the earthquake. Janet, for example, began going to church again as a way of showing her thanks for the help she had received after the earthquake: "I went back to church because I

was just ever so grateful for the way they'd done everything". This also expanded her social network further because she began to participate in social gatherings through the church with other people her own age. Stephanie also expressed that she would like to start going to church after the positive support experiences she had had since the earthquake:

Now I wanna get back into a church organization. Just for the children. I've never been religious, but you know, I mean they give so much, they help so much. So I said to [my partner] the other day, it's important for me to give back and for the children.

Being able to return the assistance in some way was crucial for participants to feel more comfortable with being in a position where they had to accept support from these organizations, while also helping to foster ongoing relationships with these organizations. For John, the earthquakes had placed him in a position where he felt less independent, and being able to give back by donating fruit from his garden or by volunteering to garden other people's homes helped to ease this exchange: "cos while we're taking I get very upset. I get uptight".

Some Sumner participants also described being reluctant about accepting support from the hub and other forms of emergent civil society because they felt they were unable to reciprocate. However, because they felt their needs were already being adequately met, they did not necessarily seek out any assistance that was available through local efforts:

I probably didn't have anything to offer it at the time. Probably too wound up in our things and didn't have any real need for [it]. And, you know, we were okay for food.

*(Hamish, Sumner resident)*

Meanwhile, Vicki and her husband chose not to take advantage of another local initiative because they could not give their time to take part in the assistance being offered: "Allen and I couldn't give to that because we both work full time and we don't like sort of taking things without giving". Perhaps because the support available through local civil society initiatives in Sumner was through mutual assistance among local residents rather than more formalized organizations providing earthquake relief, this may have deterred some residents from becoming involved in local civil society. It also indicates that these participants perceived there to be an expectation that appropriate involvement in this resident-run civil society should include some

sort of mutual or reciprocal participation. If one was unable to participate in a two-way or mutual exchange, they were uncomfortable with becoming involved at all.

Social support literature suggests that only being on the receiving end of support can have detrimental effects on self-esteem (Hogan, Linden, & Najarian, 2002). More broadly, Norris, et. al's (2008) community resilience framework emphasizes that community-wide disaster resilience can be strengthened when residents are more able to participate and become self-sufficient through mutually assisting one another. Being able to reciprocate support may be an important aspect in allowing those who have received support through civil society to feel more actively involved in their own, as well as the neighbourhood's, recovery. Generally, those in Sumner who did have an ongoing relationship with some civil society group tended to participate as a member of a group rather than as recipients of a service, and this will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has offered a comparison between how residents of Sumner and Aranui engaged with local civil society as a source of early post-disaster relief and assistance, whether through material, informational, financial, and even emotional and psychological means. Importantly, it has sought to position these experiences within the context of the social networks of those involved and the access to various resources participants had through other means. I argue that these contextual considerations are important for understanding why residents turned to civil society for resources following the earthquake; participants' social networks, how they were impacted by the earthquake and for some, their previous history with some civil society organizations held significance for how participants interacted with civil society. In line with social support and social network literature, nearly all participants relied primarily on their social networks of kin and friends for post-disaster support, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the quake. Meanwhile, the access that different participants had to financial and material resources, independent of social networks, was also described as an important element in meeting basic needs after the quake.

People from both suburbs felt confident that the mobilization of resources through local groups and organizations was an integral part of local disaster response efforts, regardless of whether participants utilized them extensively or briefly. In contrast, many participants felt the government response within their suburb paled in comparison, which some found disappointing. In Aranui, in particular, the separation between state and civil society was not always clear, likely due to collaboration between state agencies and local NGOs and faith-based organizations. Nevertheless, those who relied more heavily on support outside their existing social networks found the assistance they received from local churches and community groups to be far more pivotal to their post-earthquake recovery than that which was available through government. In Sumner, where the government response was not necessarily felt, the distinction between state and civil society was far more distinct. This was also likely because emergent grassroots groups were initially based on sharing local resources and information rather than coordinating incoming donations and volunteers through existing professional civil society and government relationships.

Another key difference between the two neighbourhoods was in the types of early relationships that participants developed with local civil society. Where Aranui participants often described their early relationship with local civil society in a provider-receiver context, Sumner participants tended to describe early civil society relief efforts in the neighbourhood as characterized by mutual assistance and sharing of local resources and knowledge. Since many Aranui groups had pre-existing roles in providing services within the neighbourhood, it should perhaps not come as a surprise that most Aranui participants saw local NGOs and faith-based organizations as sources of assistance. Nevertheless, these participants accepted this support for as long as they felt they were in greater need or disadvantage because of the earthquake, but most were reluctant to continue this relationship for an extended period of time, not wishing to appear like they were unnecessarily taking advantage of these resources that were better given to those in greater need. Perhaps the relative informality of many exchanges in Sumner, due to the mutual-assistance and neighbourhood-based nature of the resources and skills utilized, may have led to differences in how people engaged with local civil society; less through material means and more through information and tasks.

Finally, the role of socioeconomic status and the relative wealth of each neighbourhood should not be ignored when looking at how participants described meeting their needs and engaging with local civil society. While all the participants in the study demonstrated a high degree of capacity and resourcefulness to look after their own needs and those of their loved ones in the aftermath of the earthquake, their personal financial and material resources and those available through their social networks were quite significant to participants' perception of being able to cope with the challenges experienced after the earthquake. Ultimately, it was the more socially isolated and impoverished households, all within Aranui, who found the resources and support available through local civil society most helpful in meeting basic needs. These participants were doubly disadvantaged in that their pre-earthquake circumstances made it particularly difficult for them to cope with the effects of the earthquake for an extended period of time afterwards, despite the return of power and amenities.

Targeting the lower-income demographic in Aranui, the influx of different organizations and volunteers into the suburb and the material supplies that were donated combined with existing organizations to ensure that there were adequate resources rapidly available in the suburb to meet people's needs in a variety of different ways. In Sumner, many felt that the resources available *within* the neighbourhood were adequate, and that civil society provided merely one form through which to tap into those resources and make them available to those who may have needed them. With different socioeconomic contexts, the role of civil society in each neighbourhood developed differently following the earthquake, and as the next chapter continues to explore, slightly different motivations began to emerge for why residents engaged with civil society. However, in the nearly two years that passed between the devastation of the February 2011 earthquake and when fieldwork for this study took place, there is much to indicate that the role of local civil society in its aftermath is perhaps just as connected to the pre-existing social conditions within those suburbs as it is about the physical impact of the disaster itself.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL PARTICIPATION: MEMBERS, LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS**

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### **5.1 Introduction**

“The success in Mano owes much to its people’s efforts, the web of community groups and local leadership.” (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004, p. 17)

Recent disaster literature, including Nakagawa and Shaw’s (2004) study of neighbourhood recovery in post-disaster Japan and India, suggests that the relative success in some neighbourhoods recovering from disaster is not a result of civil society alone. Rather, it depends also on the combination of local leadership and the ability of residents to act collectively. The previous two chapters have established how existing and emergent forms of civil society mobilized after the earthquake and how the relief and assistance that was provided by these groups was utilised by local residents. Situating these support relationships within the context of the different emerging needs in each neighbourhood as well as support available through other means has helped establish that local civil society played a significant role in mobilizing important resources within each suburb. Chapter Five seeks to build on the work of the previous two chapters by shedding further light on how local contexts have shaped both the form and function of post-disaster civil society while also exploring variances in how and why participants engaged with these groups after the earthquake. More specifically, it explores participants’ motivations for becoming more involved in local civil society and the meaning of those interactions within the context of the post-quake social environment and the challenges they faced at the household and neighbourhood level. Since a great deal of recent disaster literature has emphasized the importance of collective action between residents and how local leadership

through civil society can encourage and mobilize such action, the extent to which civil society was utilized in this way is also compared.

Examining the key themes that emerged from participants' descriptions about their involvement with civil society reveals that the reasons for becoming involved in civil society differed slightly between Sumner and Aranui participants. Many participants in both suburbs volunteered in neighbourhood-based civil society after the quake because they saw it as an avenue through which to help others. This is consistent with disaster literature that discusses the heightened altruism that often defines areas in the immediate aftermath of a disaster (Dynes, 1994; Kaniasty & Norris, 1995). It also fits with disaster research which applies a social capital framework for understanding how mutual assistance and the flow of resources can be a function of certain social relationships, which civil society may help to nurture.

Beyond this, however, the impetus to create or join a group in Sumner was more varied. Many participants used civil society as a way to organize around common issues or interests after the earthquake. For others, organizing collectively was seen as an opportunity to gain more control over decisions directly affecting residents, particularly when they felt that Sumner, or their ability to continue living there, was under threat. Often, such involvement was also contextualized within a strong sense of place-attachment. Some Sumner participants also described an emerging sense of self-governance through civil society in response to the earthquakes, with civil society becoming a vehicle for driving locally-based participatory planning processes and advocacy. This chapter uses the above themes to discussing each suburb separately and explores residents' descriptions of their participation in neighbourhood-based civil society and mutual assistance before the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the similarities and differences observed between the suburbs.

## ***5.2 Altruism, Mutual Assistance, and Civil Society Post-Disaster***

Disaster research has frequently observed that an influx of helping behaviour often converges upon areas affected by disaster, sometimes labelled as 'altruistic' or 'therapeutic' communities (Kaniasty & Norris, 1995), with some of the earliest research on post-disaster altruistic



behaviour dating back to the 1960s (e.g., Barton, 1969; Fritz, 1961). Characterized by a sense of solidarity, a temporary breakdown of class, ethnic, and other social barriers, and a rush of volunteers and supplies into the disaster-affected area, Dynes (1994) argues that this behaviour is both patterned and important since it accounts for much of the initial response in the emergency period immediately following the disaster. Social support literature has followed ways in which individuals typify this altruistic behaviour and it is generally established that helping behaviour occurs primarily through existing networks of family and friends, but may also extend out to neighbours, and others in one's social networks (Kaniasty & Norris, 2004). Support provision is also influenced by sociodemographic factors, however, and people who are socially or economically disadvantaged may be overburdened and unable to provide support (Kaniasty & Norris, 1995). Dynes (1994; 2005) argues that civil society is an important conduit through which post-disaster altruism is enacted. While most disaster researchers do not dispute the occurrence of an influx in altruistic behaviour post-disaster, many are quick to point out that post-disaster volunteer activity is often relatively short-lived (Pardess, 2008), and that not all people experience the benefits of this surge in altruistic behaviour (Kaniasty & Norris, 2004). Looking at the altruistic motivations of local residents and how this relates to their civil society involvement will help to shed further light on how the pre- and post-disaster social environment may help instigate local engagement in civil society in the longer-term.

More recently, the concept of social capital has been increasingly applied by way of explaining how a neighbourhood recovers from disaster, as facilitated by social norms, trust, and networks (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004). Social capital, depending on which specific conceptualization one chooses to use, attempts to encompass how information and resources flow through complex networks of individuals, often seeing it as a function of relationships that are defined by mutual trust and reciprocity (Coleman, 1988). Even though social capital can function outside of civil society, participation in local civil society and associational life is often viewed as evidence of social capital between neighbourhood residents, as is the ability of residents to mobilize collectively around a common cause for mutual benefit (Aldrich, 2008; Putnam, 1995). Due to a lack of consensus on how to clearly define and measure the concept, this study has avoided relying heavily on the concept of social capital and the focus of this study has remained more

specifically on the role of civil society instead. However, descriptions of civil society participation by residents in both neighbourhoods were also frequently interwoven with stories of mutual help between neighbours, and a sense of ‘community’ that abounded after the earthquake due to people coming together to help one another, something social capital theorists may label as evidence of social capital building between residents. Sometimes this was described in conjunction with civil society involvement, sometimes external to it, and the distinction between this is explored alongside the applicability of the concept of social capital in explaining this experience.

Several Aranui participants became involved in civil society because of the visibility of local relief efforts in the suburb; seeing organizations mobilizing supplies or being approached by other volunteers was enough to instigate some residents to offer their time as volunteers. Often, such volunteering occurred through existing NGOs in the suburb who had assumed disaster support roles after the earthquake. Participants who volunteered with these organizations described taking on specific jobs to do with earthquake support provision, however, and this did not necessarily expand out into further roles or responsibilities within existing organizations.

Shortly after the earthquake and before power and water were restored, Anne observed out-of-town volunteers arriving at a local NGO near her house. Feeling like her own needs were being sufficiently met, she was nevertheless aware of others in the neighbourhood whom she knew were struggling to access certain resources. By becoming involved as a volunteer, she was able to direct resources to others in her local social network:

Well I seen them at the end of the day, packing up. And so I just went over and said, ‘oh...you want a hand packing the truck?’ ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah’...helped them stack all their boxes back in. And they told me they were gonna be back, doing area by area...and so I sort of helped that way too, because I knew of people that really could do with...blankets and....bits, whatever they had, medical things...

*(Anne, Aranui resident)*

Just as the extra-local networks of Aranui-based NGOs such as the one near Anne’s house were essential in bringing resources and volunteers into the suburb, Anne’s local networks and knowledge were useful in helping target support to local residents in potentially more vulnerable circumstances. However, Anne also described how she was somewhat guarded about sharing

information about what was available through the organization she volunteered for because she felt some would misuse it, “I wasn’t just gonna tell any old body, ‘cos...you know what they’re gonna do with it.” Anne believed she was acting appropriately by only sharing information with people she felt needed it. It indicates that the altruistic behaviour she described through her volunteering was influenced by existing perceptions she had about different people in the area, highlighting that the motivations for her involvement as a volunteer may have also stemmed from the inclination to help those that *she knew* rather than solely from a generalized sense of wanting to help others.

Sina’s motives for becoming a volunteer were not necessarily directed at helping people she knew personally within Aranui, but through the potential that volunteering offered her to reach out to other Pacific families in the suburb. A Pacific migrant herself, she was recruited as a volunteer after being approached by a local group inquiring if she and her family required any assistance. Sina decided to start volunteering because she recognised that cultural barriers could prevent local Pacific families from getting assistance: “They know that the Islanders are always distancing themselves...they like to keep it to themselves. And that’s how I got involved.” While her volunteer work was not solely directed at helping Pacific families, it was part of what instigated Sina to volunteer. Again, this serves as an indication that, while she had altruistic motives for becoming a volunteer, they were also linked, in this case, to her own ethnic identity and sense of responsibility to other Pacific people in the area.

Teresa also described altruistic motives in wanting to help others in Aranui. She was already involved in community work before the earthquake and viewed her post-quake volunteer work as an extension of her existing professional role in a non-profit organization that offered services within the neighbourhood. While her motivations for volunteering within Aranui may seem to have different roots than Anne’s or Sina’s, she still expressed a desire to help people in the neighbourhood because she felt connected to them, having lived there her whole life and because she recognized that there were others in the area that require more support:

I think it’s the need. You see the need. And the desire to want to help, you want to support. I mean, I consider myself one of the successful people that have, you know, gone out and done something for myself. Have a career, have a fantastic family, I’ve bought a home, done all that. And then I see my peers and

those that live around me haven't quite made that and I kind of want to inspire them to do that.

While this comment relates more generally to her ongoing work within Aranui and is not limited to her post-quake volunteering, it demonstrates that she has made a conscious decision to be involved in civil society in Aranui specifically because of her social ties to the area. The volunteering she did after the earthquake was done in the same vein and the altruistic motives she describes are tied to the neighbourhood. She shows particular dedication, and even a sense of responsibility to other Aranui residents, to whom she feels responsible.

In Sumner, the desire to help others affected by the disaster was also expressed strongly by some participants, and, like in Aranui, volunteering provided an avenue through which to channel this helping behaviour. Unlike Aranui, however, the lack of formalized groups operating in the suburb initially after the quake meant that there was no clear place where residents could volunteer. This frustrated Lily, who actively sought out ways to help others, even though this was not something she felt she would have normally done in other circumstances:

Basically, because we were unable to do anything, there was nowhere to go and help, we had to [laughs] start it. And that's not something I would ordin...I'm not usually...I wouldn't be the first, you know? [laughs] But I desperately wanted to help, you know? I was sure that there were people who needed help.

*(Lily, Sumner resident)*

In Lily's case, although she did not have many ties with other residents in Sumner and therefore lacked specific knowledge of people requiring assistance, it was still where she felt she needed to direct any support she could provide. She felt the lack of formalized assistance in the area initially hindered her from being able to identify where help was needed and how to be involved in providing that assistance, something she felt very strongly about doing. Daniel echoed Lily's sentiments about the strong desire to help others more generally, although in the absence of any local organizations he went out in Sumner and other heavily affected areas of the city to look for ways in which to help:

I think it was an urge to be back in the community, you know, and to help. This crazy urge to help rebuild something, you know? I mean, a few times we went out, and friends went out and just volunteered. Digging up the streets over in liquefaction, stuff where we just got in the car and drove over and found someone

we could help out, you know, that sort of stuff. But, I mean, yeah I think...it was that desire to help the community more than anything else really.

*(Daniel, Sumner resident)*

The altruism that compelled some participants to volunteer was also evident in participants' descriptions of making donations to local relief efforts, since for Douglas donating material resources to people operating through the local hub was important: "I think in some small way I thought I was helping." Meanwhile, just as Teresa felt her volunteer work was simply an extension of her existing work role and responsibility within Aranui, Sumner participants who were either employed professionally or were already committed to volunteer activities in the suburb expressed how their existing roles allowed them to help others in the area even though they did not volunteer extensively through any other means. This was the case regardless of whether these roles were enacted through civil society.

Instances of mutual assistance and helping others in the suburb after the earthquake, even without civil society facilitating such exchanges, were quite significant for many participants. Support exchanges between neighbours often formed new relationships and strengthened existing ones, and several participants felt that the quake forced them to become closer with their neighbours:

I know from my...from me personally, since the earthquakes I now know my neighbours so well. In fact not just my next door neighbours, the neighbours down the road, across the road, and I think the earthquake has made us do that. I won't say it's been a voluntary thing, it's actually made us do it, to go and check on people to see if they're okay...

*(Teresa, Aranui resident)*

I think it's shared. One is shared experiences, and, you know, even just down to EQC experiences. You know [laughs], like helping each other out, I think it's just, we've all been through this crazy experience together, haven't we, and I think we all got to know each other better through it.

*(Daniel, Sumner resident)*

Comments such as these further indicate that civil society was not the only means through which participants mutually assisted each other within the neighbourhood, since the earthquake sparked many exchanges external to civil society that were equally, and in some cases, more significant for participants.

### 5.2.1 Sumner and Aranui in comparative perspective

Participants in both suburbs expressed a strong desire to help out after the earthquakes, and for some participants, volunteering locally was a means through which to do this. It was also a new experience for some of the participants in both suburbs, who were either new to volunteer work, or had not had any previously established relationships with these civil society groups. Yet while the desire to help others after the earthquake was the driving factor for several of these participants' voluntarism, it did not necessarily result in extended involvement with these organizations beyond participants' roles in providing disaster support. Most Aranui participants discontinued volunteering after the demand for relief had dissipated, not surprisingly, because the need for the specific service they were providing became unnecessary. This fits with descriptions in disaster literature of the relatively short-lived nature of so-called altruistic or therapeutic communities. Nevertheless, the experience was largely positive and participants enjoyed the work even amidst their own challenges after the earthquake, particularly because they felt it helped them cope with their own post-earthquake issues:

I had time to think about other people and...yeah, take the focus off what I was feeling, you know, missing my grandson? Yeah...[the NGO]....they were really, really good to me. They were really good.

*(Anne, Aranui resident)*

It definitely helped me because it kept me occupied and I was able to help instead of, you know, worrying [laughs] about myself. And of course I had first hand, you know, I had the information and everything first

*(Lily, Sumner resident)*

Participants in both suburbs also described how knowledge of people in the suburb who required additional support, combined with a sense of responsibility towards others in the suburb was an important part of what drove them to become volunteers. As much as altruism helped define several participants' post-earthquake voluntarism, the focus of some disaster research on the idea of an emergent altruistic or therapeutic 'community' may be overly simplistic in its approach, since it fails to capture the complexity of the social relationships involved in individuals' choices to help others or become involved as volunteers following disaster, nor does it capture the full scope of what motivates some people to engage with civil society in post-disaster activities.

As explored in Chapter Four, a wealth of research exists to support the premise that social networks, encompassing family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and even local religious congregations, serve as the primary route through which assistance is provided and received following disasters (Kaniasty & Norris, 2004). Yet social support literature tends to fall short of capturing the ways in which social networks may overlap into the assistance available through formal agencies and organizational assistance, particularly when there is a surge in voluntary behaviour within these groups or when existing roles within such organizations are occupied by those directly affected by the disaster. Social capital literature, which has subsumed much of the earlier research on social support and social networks, offers a slightly different approach, by viewing social networks in terms of the resources embedded within social networks, and uses a broader scope in understanding how resources may flow through social networks without attempting to define whether they stem from ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ sources. Much of the recent literature on the role of neighbourhood-level civil society following disaster, although only encompassing a small number of studies, has also applied the concept of social capital by way of explaining resident participation in civil society activities during post-disaster relief and recovery processes. It has also been used to explore mutual assistance that occurs between people who are connected through various social circumstances. Despite variances in its definition and measurement across different studies, Nakagawa and Shaw’s (2004) application of the concept, which also encompasses the function of “social norms such as obligation and willingness towards mutually beneficial collective action” (p. 10) does have resonance with the descriptions of most participants and the mutual assistance that took place between neighbours and through civil society.

### ***5.3 Participation in Grassroots Civil Society in Sumner***

Chapter Three concluded that the majority of civil society organizations in Sumner that provided post-disaster relief and support for local residents emerged after the earthquake, rather than being driven by existing civil society organizations as was the case in Aranui. Several Sumner participants who were involved in these groups described how these groups were created to address what they felt was a lack of response on the part of authorities. For many participants, this was a major factor which guided their choice to create or become more involved in local

civil society. Initially, the feeling that relief efforts were largely bypassing Sumner led to the establishment of the local hub as a resident-run grassroots initiative.

For several participants who became involved in this and other local grassroots projects, the earthquake created a large-scale shared experience that, combined with a perception that outside assistance was not forthcoming, motivated them to organize collectively not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the suburb in general. Organising themselves collectively through the formation of groups with shared interests and issues was thus viewed as a necessity, since participants often felt like there were no other options available but to act upon emerging issues and concerns themselves. Organized group activity, no matter how informal, made some residents like Hamish feel like they could address collective issues more broadly and present them with a stronger voice to relevant authorities: “Really, behind it all is just to say hey, it’s not just me saying look at me look at me it’s saying look at our community.”

People also described the grassroots-level planning and organizing they took part in as being the most effective way to gather accurate information about issues affecting people in the area. Hamish felt that residents would trust a local resident ‘on the ground’ more than they would CERA and the time-wasting bureaucratic procedures they thought would inevitably follow:

They [CERA] couldn’t have done it. People trust us that are on the ground. And if CERA said they were gonna do it they’d have to have a, you know, a meeting to arrange the meeting, and then they’d get specialists in and inspect with their lawyers and...

*(Hamish, Sumner resident)*

Others felt that the only way to get help was to combine forces and help each other, a view that was frequently described alongside a perception of the suburb as a ‘community’ to which participants felt they had a responsibility to support, just as volunteers in Aranui also expressed. This is particularly clear in Lily’s description of her motivation to become involved in the hub:

We set this up so we can help ourselves, you know, because nobody is gonna help us. Everybody is in trouble and we need to come together as a community and help each other, you know? So that’s the function of the hub.

*(Lily, Sumner resident)*



While Chris felt that the way in which Sumner organizations had responded was quite successful and beneficial for the suburb, he also voiced his frustration about the lack of attention he felt Sumner received from the government, city council, and civil defence, echoing Lily's sentiment that no other options were available at the time:

We're just constantly being called resilient when we don't actually have the choice [laughs]. We don't want to leave and we still have a very strong community that we don't want to leave either. Yeah, it's just having to make do.

*(Chris, Sumner resident)*

This comment also highlights two other important components in the narrative of Sumner participants, particularly among those who remained engaged with local civil society on an ongoing basis after the quake: in addition to feeling they acted out of sheer necessity, place attachment and feeling as though their home or the suburb was under threat were also significant factors in why people described becoming involved in local organisations.

This sense of place attachment to the suburb, either to people and/or the locale itself that some residents described gave them a local identity separate from 'Christchurch'. Yet it was not necessarily generalized to everyone within the neighbourhood, although most participants described having dense network connections in the suburb. The proximity to the coast and hills and the type of lifestyle that prevailed there further tied them to the neighbourhood:

Our neighbourhood is just everything to us. I mean, we feel very blessed every day that we wake up and we live here. We're close to the sea and the hills; we utilize the area and its resources all the time. We have very good friends in the area; we have a lot of family in the area. It's often hard to go across the causeway and go into Christchurch because it's just so lovely here. It's a fabulous place to raise children and the sense of community is really really strong.

*(Vicki, Sumner resident)*

One of the reasons we came back here is because I knew it'd be an awesome place, just to be around our neighbours again, so it's strong neighbour, you know, really good neighbourhood relationships.

*(Daniel, Sumner resident)*

It's always been quite a relaxed, family-oriented community. Obviously, we've got strong connections with the beach and the surrounding hills.

*(Chris, Sumner resident)*

Becoming involved in local civil society beyond the initial relief effort was often described through this place attachment, although it was also intertwined with their own concerns and

interests about what they felt was threatened in the post-quake environment. The impact of the earthquake and the subsequent response and decisions made by authorities at both city council and CERA made them feel as though their homes and the community at large were under threat of being permanently lost or changed in a way that was detrimental to the suburb and its residents:

We're stressed 'cos we don't know the future of the house. We might go, we might get red zoned, we might have to move out of here. And you say well, surely there's somewhere else you can buy. Well it won't be in this area 'cos there's so many of us and we all want to stay. The good properties will go in a hurry. And there's nowhere else in Christchurch that we want to live, 'cos we want to be by the sea and we like to be on the hill and on and on it goes. [Our son]'s at school, can't take him out of that. So that's why we've dug in hard. Just, you know, you can take us out in handcuffs now. And that's why we just push push push push push push push.

*(Hamish, Sumner resident)*

Sharing common interests and issues with other residents, such as the concern for their homes or about the redevelopment of the suburbs was therefore frequently a starting point for resident involvement in local organizations. For some, the possibility of permanently losing their homes and properties was of primary concern. Others were critical of the way in which government was handling the redevelopment of the neighbourhood and feared there would be negative effects of government decision-making on residents and the overall well-being of the suburb if citizen groups did not intervene:

There's just a total lack of respect for all those key social spaces and regular gatherings and events which are just lost....something as simple as the facilities are gone and the building's been red stickered or it's in the red zone. But there's been very little compensation.

*(Chris, Sumner resident)*

Cara spoke of having skills she knew would be useful for helping local groups manage themselves more effectively, access funds, and disseminate information and was similarly motivated by how being involved in such local organizations could be beneficial for herself as well as the entire suburb:

Whatever was going to happen in Sumner was going affect me and if I could make that difference...if anything I wanted to give our community a voice. I wanted to give our community an opportunity to stand up and do something wonderful.

*(Cara, Sumner resident)*

How participants thought they could ‘make a difference’ was viewed from many different angles: environmental, commercial, social, etc. and participants described either joining or creating different groups together with others who shared their common interest or issues. Thus there was a great deal of diversity in the types of concerns or interests that people shared, and this may also explain the subsequent diversity in groups that were formed after the earthquake.

Most participants generally felt that local social relationships had improved after the earthquake, and that the efforts of local civil society were seen as both a cause and effect of this improvement. Viewed as an effect, some participants thought that the earthquake had created a better sense of awareness about the need to be more engaged with others in their neighbourhood:

We did really did want to, like, ride that wave and push it. Keep it going. Yeah, the community spirit. I guess it is in hard times people really come together.

*(Lily, Sumner resident)*

Civil society was also seen as a cause of this improvement, because some participants viewed the formation of local organizations as providing an avenue through which to capture the renewed sense of interest in local engagement that had come about after the quake. Chris observed this when speaking about the one of the Sumner groups he had been involved in pre-quake: “Now there’s just a new energy and interest in [the group] as it’s captured some of that sort of awareness that’s come out of the earthquake.” Although Daniel felt that in recent years Sumner had not been as socially interconnected as it had been in the past, he also believed that the earthquake and the way in which local organizations and residents responded afterwards had strengthened the sense of community in Sumner:

I think Sumner had a bit of a stigma about, oh, it wasn’t like it used to be, but I think Sumner has really, as a community, it’s come together. In fact, we had a street party for the first time in, you know, years. Just after the February quake, I think, and they’re organizing the one now. So there’s a much better sense of community here. I really think that.

*(Daniel, Sumner resident)*

Daniel’s reference to the street party that ‘we’ had, and the one that ‘they’ were organizing was one of many comments participants made that illustrated very little differentiation between the

efforts of local residents and that of local organizations, since they were mostly one and the same. Local groups often operated through fairly informal means with little structure or hierarchy, and the street party he refers to was part of a new initiative through one such local group, the Sumner Business Group, organized by those with commercial interests in the suburb.

The grassroots nature of such neighbourhood-level organizing often meant that people viewed their interaction with local civil society as contact *among* friends and neighbours rather than *between* residents and organizations. As such, several described feeling that group meetings, working bees, and locally organized events had helped to foster closer local relationships. Hamish, for example felt that he “got to know a whole lot of different people through these groups.”

Meanwhile, a few participants involved in Sumner groups also found that their civil society involvement connected them not only to others in the neighbourhood, but also to an extended network of other like-minded people and organizations throughout the city. Chris, for example, commented on how his civil society participation had helped develop new relationships both within Sumner as well as around the city. He also felt that the quality of the relationships through his grassroots-based civil society involvement were more positive and rewarding than those through more structured, formalized, official meetings:

There’s a lot of people who’ve come out of the post-earthquake stuff. People who you might’ve just known by face that you now know by name. And shared interests. Yeah, the earthquake definitely bridged a whole lot of, well, created a whole lot of new relationships. (Interviewer: Mostly local relationships?) Yeah, yeah, but then there’s through my work, that helps span out into wider Christchurch, in the committees and advisory groups and action groups. And it just depends, sort of, on more grassroots- oriented activities that [are] really sort of light-hearted or there’s just warmth around those types of meetings instead of suits and ties and [laughs] fixed agenda.

*(Chris, Sumner resident)*

Yet these experiences were not always entirely positive. Amidst descriptions of Sumner as possessing a better sense of community and feelings that social relationships had been strengthened by the quake and through the work of local organizations, some participants also

expressed frustration and disappointment with certain aspects of their experience in dealing with other local residents. This was especially true for those who had devoted a great deal of time and energy to local projects. Even though Lily felt that the Hub had brought residents closer, as normality began to return to the area and the urgency of such work diminished slightly she felt that the community-mindedness that drove the Hub began to wane:

I did feel a lot like people went back to being very much caught up in their lives and if there was a shake, then they were worrying about themselves rather than about their neighbours or whatever.

Cara also expressed frustration at the difficulty of recruiting or maintaining volunteers in the groups in which she was involved. As people returned to their normal routines, she started to question the viability of certain projects and whether they were worth continuing, something that others questioned as well within their own groups. Voicing his own frustration about the feeling that some residents took advantage of the welfare hub without contributing towards its operation, Chris even went so far as to differentiate himself and other residents who became ardent volunteers with other less-engaged residents, whom he presumed were also more affluent Sumner residents:

They were who were seen pulling up to the welfare hub that was set up. They [the hub volunteers] were residents with no support from civil defence or council, sourced everything by themselves, and then you had those kind of folk turning up in their Mercedes [laughs] and asking for a bottle of water just because they're not prepared and they can see the handout. Why is it that people put their hands out and will take but very few actually sort of go what can I do to help?

Comments such as the latter indicate that while civil society may be beneficial to people beyond the small number who are actively involved in its coordination and operation, it does not necessarily result in a more well-connected neighbourhood overall. Rather, the social connections between those residents who were contributing to local civil society in what were perceived to be positive and meaningful ways become more strengthened. The concept of social capital has some applicability in this context, since it fits with the norms of trust and reciprocity that social capital theorists argue must define such relationships in order for social capital to function. All the same, looking back on participants' experiences of support from Chapter Four suggests that even those who did not engage as much as others received some benefit from local civil society.

Another less positive example is in the case of Lily, who not having known many people in Sumner before the earthquake, described feeling isolated when a third major earthquake struck almost four months later in June 2011. This was after she had been quite heavily involved in local civil society after the earthquake. The experience of feeling socially isolated despite this involvement saddened her, and she moved out of the suburb shortly thereafter.

I didn't have friends, aside from the people I'd helped. And I remember just feeling really alone because people didn't, uh, I felt like people didn't know who I was, even though we were the ones, you know, we were the impetus? And the core of the whole thing? So that was kind of sad.

Even though she does not attribute this as the reason for her decision to move, it shows that civil society participation alone was not necessarily enough to create strong ties within the suburb. These examples bring attention to an aspect of civil society that some researchers and theorists have attempted to point out: there are many assumptions about the potentially beneficial aspects of civil society participation and how these benefits trickle down throughout the community. Yet the presence of these civil society groups, and participation in them did not always create social connectivity in the way that may have been expected. Lily's experience was mostly positive, and she found much value in her civil society participation, both for herself and others, yet she also noticed how temporary it felt for her; the relationships that she made through civil society were not as long-lasting or as intimate as she may have hoped.

Chamlee-Wright & Storr (2009) argue that the actions of civil society in response to perceived threats to the neighbourhood following a disaster can help anchor positive expectations for residents and have a self-fulfilling quality on neighbourhood recovery. In their comparison of three different New Orleans neighbourhoods heavily affected by Hurricane Katrina, they found that neighbourhoods that exhibited more successful recovery, measured by the return of residents, reopening of local businesses, and the reestablishment of local infrastructure were also those which had significant local input in grassroots-based civil society within their neighbourhood. Whether the benefit for Sumner residents lies only within the context of temporary disaster relief as opposed to long-term recovery is difficult to assess within the confines of this study, although it would be an important aspect for future research to explore.

#### ***5.4 Leadership and Civil Society in Sumner***

A cursory examination of the sheer number of civil society groups in Sumner that have emerged since the earthquake and the comments of participants about their increased participation in such groups suggests that the earthquake acted as a catalyst for the expansion of neighbourhood-based civil society in Sumner. Early disaster researchers observed the proliferation of emergent groups following crises and disaster (e.g. Stallings & Quarantelli, 1985). The post-quake development of civil society in Sumner has provided a case in point, backing up much of what Stallings and Quarantelli (1985) established about the characteristics of emergent citizen groups after disasters and crises. As later research began to look more closely at the influence and function of such collective organization in recovering from disaster events the concept of social capital began to be applied more frequently to explain the ways in which groups, both emergent and existing, were able to assist in post-disaster neighbourhood recovery. Nonetheless the importance of local leadership cannot and should not be overlooked, both in terms of the way in which local leaders emerged after the earthquake to establish and manage local civil society and also in their ability to mobilize large numbers of people. Groups emerged in Sumner because particular individuals took on leadership roles in response to the impact of the earthquake amidst the perception that there were issues not being adequately dealt with.

Hamish described his motivation for initiating a new group in Sumner around particular post-quake issues as stemming from his realization that no one else was stepping forward: “I thought why is no one doing that here in Christchurch for the earthquake? There’s no one like that.” This was an opinion Cara also vocalized in describing her own initiative in setting up new community groups in Sumner: “I did it because there was a need for it and no one did anything about it except for [one other resident]”. Even though Cara described herself as someone who would naturally “muck in and get involved”, most had not been prominent in any local organizations prior to the earthquake, and agreed that the earthquake had moved them to act.

As Chapter Three found, Sumner participants who took on leadership roles often brought skills with them due to their professional roles and past experience that soon proved useful in the ongoing management of their newly established groups. The combination of having local

residents with useful skills who were also willing to devote their skills and energy to collective issues helped many groups become more established and formalized, and has likely been a contributing factor to the sustainability of some of these groups after the immediate earthquake relief needs had subsided. In their study of the factors contributing to sustainable civil society in post-quake Kobe, Nakagawa and Shaw (2004) argue that local leadership played a significant role in the post-disaster recovery of the neighbourhood of Mano, since leaders not only organized significant grassroots-led movements and projects, but were also able to effectively mobilize many residents. There was often overlap among local residents who took on leadership roles in different Sumner groups, projects, and initiatives, with the same individuals often involved in several projects or groups. However, as one participant noted, despite the relatively small number of people at the core of much of the local civil society, each of them brought an extensive social network to the group that allowed for large numbers of residents to be involved: “[the groups are] driven by a small number of people behind the scenes but the contacts that they have for their groups is quite large.”

Lily also felt that the work she and a small number of other individuals had done by establishing some of the first groups in the suburb after the earthquake had set an important precedence for the suburb: “I knew right away that even if that’s all I did, we sowed that seed. And it’s, you know, it then basically empowered the whole community”. The decision to move beyond individual acts of mutual assistance or altruism and begin establishing and organising a collective forum or plan of action to deal with issues of shared interest often hinged on the initiative of one or two individuals. Chamlee-Wright (2008), in her study of neighbourhood recovery in post-Katrina New Orleans, observed that the actions of individuals, even the individual action of returning to the neighbourhood or of neighbours mutually assisting one another after the disaster effectively signals their commitment to the rebuild and recovery of the neighbourhood, thereby instilling others to do and feel the same.

While Chamlee-Wright’s (2008) observations framed the actions of civil society and those of individual actors as separate, I argue that the actions of what was primarily a small number of individuals in initiating collective action was a key signalling effect that led to the emergence of new forms of civil society in Sumner. People who chose to take on leadership roles by



establishing new groups and providing other residents with an opportunity to share resources or collectively problem-solve to help meet each other's needs signalled their commitment to Sumner and to others in the neighbourhood and this encouraged others to do the same. The combination of the leadership initiative of some residents, the sense of place attachment that many participants described feeling for Sumner and the shared experience and issues caused by the earthquake, resulted in fertile ground for the growth of civil society which, in turn, has had the self-fulfilling effect of helping establish stronger local bonds and further develop a sense of place attachment for many participants involved.

Yet taking on leadership roles often came with a price, and some of the study participants who were heavily involved in one or more of these groups stated that they sometimes felt as though they were doing a great deal of the work themselves and had "taken the bullet to try and help here in the community". Under the surface of many of the groups that have emerged in Sumner are a relatively small number of individuals who have taken on new leadership roles within the suburb, having become the driving force of much of the post-quake emergent civil society. This participation has also required some personal sacrifices, "I've been doing all this community stuff and not focusing on my own needs". Cara worried that if she were to step down from her role, it was possible that no one would replace her, and that many things she had established would dwindle as a result. At the same time, she mused about whether certain things would even be missed by other residents were she to discontinue managing them. It poses somewhat of a conundrum about the relative informality of some aspects of civil society in Sumner, since the lack of a leader willing to dedicate time and energy to certain causes may lead the entire group to disintegrate, leading one to question exactly how much of a group existed, versus just the idea of one. Although many participants had a tendency to equate civil society action with 'the community', it is not necessarily a true reflection of the number of people actively involved in organizing and planning civil society activities in Sumner.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

Chapter Five has sought to build on the work of the previous two chapters by shedding further light on neighbourhood differences in how and why locals engaged with civil society. Even

though not all residents turned to civil society to access material resources, many participants' connected with some form of civil society group or organization in the course of the weeks and months after the earthquake. Many participants in both Sumner and Aranui became more involved with local civil society efforts as a direct result of the earthquake. Levels of participation varied, since some residents became pivotal in the formation and coordination of neighbourhood-based groups and their involvement defined a great deal of their own post-quake narrative while others had only the most cursory contact with civil society, and this was true of both suburbs. Nevertheless, clear distinctions can be made between Sumner and Aranui with regard to how residents viewed the role of civil society in the neighbourhood, and the extent to which civil society was used by participants as a vehicle for self-organisation and coordination on common issues. Likewise, the role of civil society in facilitating or strengthening relationships between residents also differed between the two suburbs, and it is possible this is connected with the ways in which residents participated in civil society organizations locally.

In most instances, participants felt connected to other residents in some way, either because of existing network ties within the suburb and/or because participants perceived other residents shared similar interests or were encountering similar post-quake issues. Importantly, such participation was also felt to be mutually beneficial, even when altruistic motives were described. Also significant is that even in less formal exchanges between individuals that fall outside the realm of what might be called 'civil society', residents in both neighbourhoods coordinated with each other in ways that were mutually supportive, and which helped to strengthen these specific relationships. In Sumner, some felt that the way in which both local groups and residents had responded after the earthquake contributed to a stronger sense of community.

The signalling effects of such behaviour may, as Chamlee-Wright (2008) argues, have a self-fulfilling effect on neighbourhood recovery, whether it occurs on an individual level such as between neighbours or through collective civil society initiatives. In Aranui, descriptions of civil society and improved relationships between local residents were often seen as separate and civil society in Aranui was often viewed as unrelated to assistance between residents. The tendency for some Sumner residents to view them as interwoven is not surprising considering civil society

in Sumner was almost entirely resident-driven and grassroots in nature. It suggests that civil society may be part, but not the whole, of understanding helps people commit to a neighbourhood rather than exiting from it following a disaster.

In Aranui, participants tended to engage with local civil society in ways that remained within the existing structures of local organizations as service providers or which had a role in supporting the area. As organizations mobilized, some residents offered their time as volunteers, keen to help others in the neighbourhood. Volunteer work was often limited to support provision and did not extend into further participation within the organizations. Perhaps because of the less formalized nature of Sumner groups, and the fact that emergent organizations were entirely run by residents, participation was more varied. Sumner groups were also formed as a way to give 'voice' to certain issues or interests, and participation required residents to coordinate together in order to have a greater impact than working individually would have provided. Stemming from such beginnings, the entire basis of Sumner groups required interaction between residents, not only face-to-face in meetings but through phone and email contact. Civil society which facilitated interaction between residents was associated with a stronger sense of community, although participants who lacked a local social connections or sense of place attachment did not necessarily feel this was lasting.

Place attachment was particularly important for Sumner participants active in local civil society, and their attachment to the neighbourhood became more visible when they felt that the neighbourhood, or their ability to continue living in it, was being threatened. This mobilized many residents into action, and also led to some residents taking on new leadership roles within the suburb through civil society. The strong desire to remain in the community and use civil society as a public stage for voicing concerns and even resisting government was driven by the decision to stay and fight, rather than exit the neighbourhood.

The actions of a relatively small number of individuals in Sumner seems to have inspired many other residents to volunteer time and resources to local groups, as well as to act collectively on issues of shared interest or concern. Those who took on leadership roles expressed a strong sense of place attachment as well as complex networks within the neighbourhood; they also

possessed important skills that were utilized through civil society. In the absence of individuals such as those who took on leadership roles and mobilized to create groups, establish community meetings, and set up central meeting places for others to converge and volunteer, it is possible that civil society would not have developed as prolifically in the suburb. It is likely that emergent leadership in Aranui was less prolific because established organizations also had people in existing leadership roles. I would argue that leadership was equally important in Aranui, although it did not necessarily mobilize large numbers of residents to work collectively insomuch as it mobilized local civil society to work together in the suburb in a supportive role.

It is important to consider the negative aspects of some participants' experiences, since it demonstrates that civil society was not necessarily a 'cure-all' for the difficulties residents encountered post-quake. Nor did it necessarily result in network connections that were important beyond the realms of the specific task-oriented activities of the group. It hints at the possibility that some relationships that have been created through the earthquake and subsequent events may be only of a temporary nature. Moving into the final chapter, the implications of these findings are explored more thoroughly.

## CONCLUSION

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### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarises my main findings, as well as the contributions and limitations of the study. It also discusses the implications of these findings from a policy perspective as well as for areas of future research, both in Christchurch and beyond. After briefly summarising the main findings from each chapter, I then discuss these findings in terms of the key differences and similarities between Sumner and Aranui, and what they indicate about the role of civil society in the post-disaster environment. This discussion includes viewing these findings not only in light of the concept and role of civil society, but how this is intertwined with historic, economic, and social processes that create conditions of vulnerability. I argue that although civil society can have a significant role to play in a neighbourhood's capacity to mitigate, respond to, and recover from disaster, future disaster research must seek to understand the complexities of pre-existing vulnerabilities, social relationships and interactions between local residents, civil society and government, and how these relate to local civil society's involvement not only in disaster recovery but also in addressing process of social inequality that lead to vulnerability for some and resilience for others.

### **6.2 Summary of Research Findings**

This research compared how civil society in two Christchurch suburbs mobilized resources and involved and interacted with residents to address emerging issues post-quake in order to understand the role of civil society in disaster response and recovery at small neighbourhood scales. From the research findings I argue that, despite socio-economic differences, there was a high capacity in both neighbourhoods to mobilise civil society as an effective means of ensuring that residents were well-supported and informed on an ongoing basis after the earthquake.

Through civil society a wide range of strategies were used to mobilize resources, maintain and/or establish vital communication lines between authorities and residents, and attempt to collectively solve problems affecting residents; in sum, civil society played an essential role in the fabric of local disaster response in each neighbourhood.

There were many benefits to the context-specific response that, in particular, *local* civil society was able to provide, including: swift mobilization post-disaster; effective use and distribution of resources useful within each neighbourhood context; buffering potentially negative effects for people in more vulnerable circumstances by addressing unmet needs; establishing and expanding both local and extra-local networks in ways that enhanced the widespread availability of important resources; and enhancing neighbourhood capacity for collaboration on issues of common interest and concern to a number of residents. The disaster also sparked a reconfiguration of local social relationships that have further enhanced the capacity of civil society in each neighbourhood to mitigate the potentially negative effects of this and future disasters. However, differences in the form and structure of civil society in each neighbourhood led to variations in how this occurred.

Although Aranui was considered the more socially vulnerable of the two suburbs, its strong tradition of civil society, especially in the last ten years, is a significant reason for the speed and effectiveness of early response in the suburb. The community development and social welfare focus meant there were many groups which had existing supportive roles in the neighbourhood, which helped ease the transition into disaster relief and support. The charity and service model that many organizations functioned within meant that formalized structures were in place in terms of funding, which was vital in ensuring the continued operation of these organizations in the suburb. Working relationships with organizations within and outside the suburb and, in some cases, partnerships with government agencies also enabled important resources, volunteers, and information to reach the suburb, and while the networks were different for each group, they each proved valuable after the earthquake.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of civil society in Aranui was its effectiveness in addressing what Bolin and Stanford (1998b) referred to as ‘unmet needs’, and these findings support

research which argues that civil society can play a significant role in addressing the needs of those who live in more vulnerable circumstances. While it may be true that there were some participants in Aranui who experienced greater vulnerability to the negative impacts of the disaster, as was explored in Chapter Four, the way in which existing civil society organizations in the suburb mobilized immediately to support residents shows that pre-existing support structures through civil society helped to remove some barriers to accessing important resources despite the lower socioeconomic status of many of its residents. The service-based capacity of many organizations also made a wide range of skills available in the suburb, useful in helping residents navigate bureaucratic procedures important for accessing government support packages, information, and dealing with more specific issues. Due to far-reaching networks beyond the suburb, local civil society also brought a diversity of resources to the suburb and this became important in addressing unmet needs for those who were doubly disadvantaged by poverty, social isolation, or other pre-quake conditions exacerbated by the disaster; in some cases, few other options were available. These findings support research that has used a vulnerability framework to understand how households and communities experience disaster, and the ongoing work of civil society in Aranui is well-aligned with recommendations regarding how civil society can be a significant factor in reducing vulnerabilities to disaster and, potentially, beyond. The supportive focus of many of these organisations was, thus, imperative.

Meanwhile, the relative autonomy from government was also a key element in the structure of Aranui's civil society, since it meant groups could make quick decisions about how to act. Groups also demonstrated a significant amount of flexibility and creativity in stepping beyond their usual roles in order to address emerging needs, adapting to ongoing work even when their own premises were inaccessible, and significantly, in working collaboratively to best address the needs of the suburb. This collaboration helped strengthen existing relationships and form new ones between various agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations, both locally and nationally which in turn, enhanced neighbourhood-wide action on various issues, and further strengthened the supportive focus of many of these groups.

At the same time, Aranui participants were not merely passive recipients of support and Chapters Four and Five showed that participants had assets they used to look after themselves, their

friends and family, and others in the neighbourhood. Civil society was at times a means through which this was done. Additionally, participants felt it was important to reciprocate the assistance they had received through local groups, and they did this in whatever way they felt was possible at the time: through sending cards, donating food, returning to church, etc. Other participants became active in local organizations after the earthquake, often in short-term, task-based volunteer work in direct response to the disaster, but as Chapter Five concluded, such participation seldom resulted in any long-term involvement in the organizations, and only one participant described how civil society helped them build relationships between other residents; none described becoming involved in decision-making regarding the redevelopment and recovery of the suburb.

In contrast, grassroots civil society emerged in Sumner in the absence of what was seen to be a lack of support for the suburb, fitting Stallings and Quarantelli's (1985) descriptions of group emergence following disaster. Although the response was not quite as speedy because organizations first had to be established, Chapter Four detailed how Sumner civil society also demonstrated many similar qualities to Aranui in the ability to respond relatively quickly and in ways that were relevant to the local context of need. As evidenced in Chapter Four, most participants felt they had adequate supplies in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, likely due to their more secure financial position and that of those within their social networks who were able to provide financial and material support more readily. Differences in the access many residents had to such resources allowed civil society to focus on utilizing and sharing resources already present in the neighbourhood rather than seeking to bring resources into the area, as was more the case in Aranui. This type of resource-sharing led to many interactions between residents and it was from this initial mutual assistance that civil society expanded and developed further. For those involved, participating in civil society was a way to collectively deal with common problems, sometimes in response to government decisions threatening their ability to continue living in the suburb. It also served to establish new relationships, both among residents and, like Aranui, outside the suburb with other civil society organizations and government agencies. Also similar to Aranui, civil society groups often collaborated with each other to address issues and needs within the suburb as well as to ensure that disaster readiness plans were put in place in the suburb.



Some participants described more complex involvement in local civil society in Sumner compared with Aranui participants, one of the key differences between the two suburbs. Among Sumner participants there were more instances of participants in active leadership roles or involvement in collective action and local decision-making. Most civil society was established, organized, and run on a voluntary basis by local residents, rather than the contract-for-service based NGOs and churches and charities offering social welfare support that are more prolific in Aranui. Sumner participants who took part in local projects through civil society described feeling a renewed sense of ‘community’ while others felt that emergent civil society in Sumner was a reflection of an already strong sense of community in the suburb that was merely strengthened by the common experience of the disaster. However, these same participants also felt that a great deal of work through new civil society initiatives was done by only a handful of dedicated volunteers, particularly as time went on. This was concerning for them because they felt the sustainability of such projects was questionable as a sense of normality slowly returned and people committed less time as active participants in local organizations. Leadership in local civil society also came with burdens on both time and people’s personal lives that may also threaten the sustainability local groups.

### ***6.3 Implications of Findings***

It is clear that civil society in both Sumner and Aranui has supported, involved, and connected residents in various ways since the earthquake, and has been a meaningful way to access support and/or collectively organize on issues of common interest. Civil society can also have different structures and functions in different contexts, and in this way the findings support literature which indicates that other factors are also important in understanding neighbourhood recovery and the role of civil society, including: local leadership, a shared, place-based identity, the type and form of civil society organizations, social capital, and neighbourhood- and household-level indicators of relative vulnerability and inequality. The intertwining of these various factors seems to influence how these neighbourhoods have coped with and taken steps in recovering from this disaster. While it is beyond the scope of this research to say exactly how this occurs in

full, several implications can be drawn from these specific research findings with regard to the role of local civil society in disaster recovery in Sumner and Aranui.

Firstly, even though Aranui was more likely to experience conditions of social vulnerability pre-disaster, the findings indicate that many aspects of existing civil society in Aranui also reduced the potentially negative impacts of vulnerable circumstances that many participants described. Because many active local community-based organisations were already targeted at increasing the access residents had to important health and social resources and reducing conditions of vulnerability, this enhanced the capacity for the neighbourhood to respond to the demand for resources after the quake hit. Many of these organisations operated within a service or charity model and some were also leading community development initiatives, all of which helped foster an environment that encouraged collaboration with each other and government on issues that were seen to be beneficial for the entire neighbourhood. Local civil society also showed a great deal of capacity in effective disaster management by identifying and responding to needs, providing effective communication to residents as well as to government, and putting structures in place for future disaster mitigation and response, indicating that the future capacity for effective neighbourhood-level disaster management has been improved even further, having a cumulative effect. With stronger collaborative relationships since the earthquake and ongoing focus on support provision and community development initiatives, there is much to indicate that the work of local civil society in Aranui is exemplary in light of recommendations from disaster research for effective neighbourhood recovery, because they “go beyond simply ‘fixing’ what the earthquake damaged” (Bolin & Stanford, 1998a, p. 35). The recently opened library, which was the result of many years of consultation with residents and activism from local civil society, and the opening of a local earthquake support centre show that civil society is playing an ongoing role in support provision and community development within the neighbourhood.

Nonetheless, there may also be limitations to the largely service-based approach that many Aranui organisations operate within, since many of the people employed within and managing local civil society are non-residents. As was discussed in earlier chapters, there is a growing body of disaster literature which emphasises that resident participation in local decision-making after a disaster is an important pathway to neighbourhood recovery, helping increase a

neighbourhood's resilience to future crises and thereby reducing vulnerability (Javernick-Will, et al., 2012; Norris, et al., 2008; Yasui, 2007). While this may not be the sole component for successful disaster recovery, whether Aranui civil society encourages this type of participation is an important consideration, particularly since the service-based models of many active NGOs in Aranui can be limited in the extent to which they encourage residents to be actively involved in decision-making at the neighbourhood-level. In the examples of participants from Aranui provided in this study, it seems to be an area where local civil society could focus more energy and attention, particularly since participants often expressed a desire to reciprocate in some way, but did not describe long-term participation in local civil society.

Complications also arise in the working model of many forms of civil society, particularly when funding is tied to purchase-for-service contracts, which are often aimed at carrying out aspects of government policy and require strict accounting and reporting procedures. It is likely that this approach to civil society in Aranui was important for buffering certain conditions of vulnerability and funnelling important resources into what might otherwise have been a resource-poor area during the disaster. However it may also be limited in encouraging the types of grassroots leadership and collective decision-making that may be vital in addressing long-term recovery and resilience to future disasters.

While the role of civil society in Sumner was similar in many ways to that in Aranui, there were many differences as well, and implications from the findings suggest different strengths and limitations in its role in assisting with Sumner's disaster recovery. While Sumner had fewer pre-existing forms of civil society that were well-equipped to respond to the earthquake and provide immediate support to the same extent as in Aranui, residents showed a high capacity to self-organise and used many resources at hand to mutually assist one another through collective efforts, which then later developed into more formalised groups and organisations. The more grassroots-based development of civil society was likely successful in Sumner because of the existing access to various resources present in the neighbourhood due to the higher economic resources and skill set of its residents. Yet, as Chapter Five explored, the mobilisation of these resources through civil society was also related to leadership and a sense of place attachment by those involved, as well as because of existing relationships with other residents. Although this

was a different approach to civil society mobilisation, it was also effective, indicating that since these conditions were present before the earthquake struck, they provided another pathway to encourage civil society development in a way that also supported the neighbourhood post-disaster. The grassroots leadership and collective decision-making among residents has defined much of Sumner's post-disaster civil society development, and initiatives such as the community-led development plans and advocacy regarding the development of a coastal pathway better connecting the suburb to the city signal that grassroots civil society has taken important steps toward neighbourhood recovery.

Civil society in Sumner is not without potential limitations either, particularly in ways that may affect the long-term sustainability of the types of local civil society initiatives that have characterised the suburb since the earthquake. The emergent nature of these groups meant that there were few, if any, formalized structures in place to support their longevity. It is only because of the commitment and foresight of a small number of residents that the knowledge gained from the quake experience has been maintained and built upon for dealing with future emergencies. This has required a considerable amount of time and use of their personal resources to enable groups to continue functioning. As interviews with participants revealed, reliance on volunteers may lead to burnout, and as time passes and people return to their 'normal' lives, volunteers may become frustrated at the waning interest of other residents or failure in achieving certain goals with the organization. There is a risk that this could lead to disenchantment with their participation in civil society, and indeed, some participants expressed that the amount of time and effort they were dedicating as volunteers in local efforts was not maintainable in the long-term; some even questioned whether it was truly valued by other residents. As Stallings and Quarantelli (1985) pointed out, many emergent groups are focused on particular tasks, just as many are in Sumner, and as these tasks are achieved or the opportunities move past, these groups may slowly cease to operate. Whether the work to date of civil society in Sumner will be beneficial to the ongoing recovery of the suburb depends on whether interest in the civil society initiatives that have been started is maintained.

Another factor in the sustainability of local civil society in Sumner is related to whether newly-founded organisations can maintain the resources necessary to continue operating. A lack of

knowledge about how to access funds to support the group may contribute to the eventual dissolution of such groups. Luckily, some residents in Sumner already had skills and knowledge in how to access funding and were motivated to participate in such a way. Aldrich (2010) argues that social capital is the single most important factor in understanding how neighbourhoods recover after disaster, arguing that the connections between residents, facilitated in part by participation in local civil society, is paramount. However, what he and other researchers who rely extensively on the concept of social capital fail to explain fully, is how local civil society through social capital *between* residents can be maintained when resources in a community are limited. The relative success of Sumner civil society in gathering and distributing resources was in large part because of the relative wealth of those in the neighbourhood, as well as their skills, both of which proved useful in continuing the operation of organizations. This is perhaps just as much related to the socioeconomic status of these residents as it is to their social connections within the suburb. The fact that these residents had money and resources available to donate freely without adversely affecting their ability to meet their day-to-day needs is important to consider. It is unlikely that these same efforts would have been equally sustainable in Aranui without the incoming resources that more formalised, service-based civil society provided.

#### **6.4 Limitations and Possibilities: Recommendations for Future Research**

Findings from both suburbs support previous disaster research that has observed that robust local civil society can help facilitate important steps in neighbourhood recovery. Success stories of neighbourhood recovery, such as that of Mano following the Kobe earthquake, or Village d'Est in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, have pointed to the importance of both leadership and widespread participation of local residents in grassroots-led civil society initiatives. This research has found similar indications in these neighbourhoods as well, although the findings also point to adopting a multi-factoral approach to understanding the role that civil society plays in assisting with recovery that embeds civil society within how it encourages and supports certain conditions that build resilience and capacity and reduce vulnerability. A key difference between this research and much of that done on civil society within the context of other disasters is that many researchers who have explored the role of civil society have done so in conjunction with the concept of social capital and how civil society can be a function of or evidence of social

capital in a neighbourhood. Although this study found evidence that social capital is useful in understanding how some participants responded and engaged with civil society after the quake, the efficacy of solely relying on social capital to explain the role of civil society is called into question.

Conducting an exploratory and descriptive study was beneficial because it allowed the research to question whether research findings from beyond the New Zealand context could be applied here. The study has provided useful information about how civil society was mobilised in each neighbourhood and the role it has played in the lives of some of its residents. This, in turn, has given valuable insight into the pathway toward recovery these neighbourhoods are on and the ongoing part that both residents and civil society alike may play in this recovery. But if we are to gain a more thorough understanding of the recovery of these neighbourhoods and how this may relate to their capacity to effectively respond to and prepare for future disasters, longer-term research is needed. The field work for this study was conducted during a relatively short period of time following the earthquake, and while the findings help to show *indications* of recovery, measuring and understanding the process through which this happens will require returning and following these areas for many years. Moore, et al. (2004) voiced similar concerns in their study following Hurricane Floyd in the U.S., making the argument that attitudes and actions of residents are likely to change at different stages of the disaster cycle. It seems unlikely that civil society in these neighbourhoods will be unchanged in five years, or ten; what recovery means to residents in this time is also likely to have shifted.

Additionally, a relatively small sample size was used for this study, both in terms of the civil society groups involved and the number of residents interviewed. The advantage of this was that it allowed for greater exploration of the topics discussed and helped develop a depth of understanding that may not otherwise have been possible. The insights gained, while useful, would be strengthened if further research sought to compare these experiences across a wider segment of the population in each neighbourhood.

Finally, because these findings suggest that civil society can help a neighbourhood on its pathway to recovery in a myriad of ways, future research should use the results of this study to

adapt and test a framework that encompasses the contextual factors that influence the role of civil society, while embedding it within other social processes. It would be untrue to say that Sumner and Aranui encountered the disaster on equal footing, as there are clear indications that the some of the challenges encountered by residents of the two neighbourhoods differed on socioeconomic grounds. At the same time, it would be equally unfair to suggest that Sumner was more capable than Aranui simply because it was a wealthier neighbourhood. A research model that seems to best fit these findings was developed by Yasui (2007) (see Appendix D), based on Blaikie, et. al's (1994) and Wisner et. al's (2004b) Vulnerability Pressure and Release Model. Yasui's (2007) adaptation, developed for the Japanese context of the Kobe earthquake, fits well with these research findings because it encompasses the spectrum of root causes and unsafe conditions that result in greater advantage for some and disadvantage for others while also allowing for understanding how certain community development initiatives, through which civil society can operate, can help reduce neighbourhood-wide vulnerability and increase the collective capacity for residents to adapt to hazards and threats. Rather than viewing factors such as economic resources or the mere presence of active civil society as beneficial for neighbourhood recovery, using a framework such as this that investigates the vulnerability and capacity of these neighbourhoods would provide a more nuanced account how these factors influence the capacity of these neighbourhoods not only to recover from this disaster, but to adapt and respond to future crises.

# APPENDIX ONE

## College of Arts

School of Social and Political Sciences  
Tel: +64 3 364 2899, Fax: + 64 364 2414  
Web site: <http://www.saps.canterbury.ac.nz/>



### INFORMATION SHEET (ORGANISATIONS)

#### Experiences of Support in Aranui/Sumner in Response to the Christchurch Earthquakes

I am currently in the process of looking for possible volunteers to participate in a study I am undertaking in partial completion of a Masters of Arts in Sociology. Any potential participants must be current residents of Aranui or Sumner, over the age of 18, who have resided within Aranui or Sumner since prior to the September 4<sup>th</sup> earthquake. The research project is entitled *Social Support Networks and Processes in Aranui and Sumner in Response to the Christchurch Earthquakes*.

The aim of this project is to illuminate the personal experiences of residents of Aranui and Sumner, how they received support following the Christchurch earthquakes and what kinds of support were received.

If anyone within the organisation knows of any residents of Aranui/Sumner who fit this criteria and whom they think would be willing to share their stories, I would greatly appreciate it if they were informed of the project and asked if they are willing to be contacted by myself, Sarah Yanicki, to learn more information about the project. Any contact details passed on to me must be at the consent of the volunteer participant, with the understanding that participation is strictly voluntary, should they wish to either not be contacted at all, or decline to participate after having being contacted.

In order to better understand the types of formal supports available within each neighbourhood and how they were mobilised following the earthquakes, I am also seeking interviews with key informants who work within local organisations in a role involved in the provision of programs both prior to and following the earthquakes. If anyone within your organisation fits this criteria and would be willing discuss how the organisation has been involved in the neighbourhood, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to contact you to discuss the project.

Involvement in this project *by residents* will be through 1-2 interviews, with an expected length of time of 1-2 hours, while involvement by *key informants within organizations* will be through one interview with an expected length of time of 1 hour. Both resident and key informant interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participation is entirely voluntary, but it does present an opportunity for residents to have experiences recorded, and for organisations to describe how they have functioned and adapted pre- and post-earthquake, so that we may better understand how meaningful support is provided and received following a large-scale event such as the Christchurch earthquakes.

Participants (both residents and key informants) have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any information provided.

The results of the project will be published as a Masters thesis, which is a public document via the University of Canterbury library database, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, there will be opportunity for participants to review the transcript of the interview and to specify sections they wish to keep confidential. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, interviews,



recorded data and transcriptions will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet, within a locked office in the Psychology Building at the University of Canterbury.

The project is being carried out by Sarah Yanicki, with the supervision of Richard Vokes, [richard.vokes@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:richard.vokes@canterbury.ac.nz), and Lyndon Fraser [lyndon.fraser@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:lyndon.fraser@canterbury.ac.nz), both from the University of Canterbury. Sarah can be contacted at 027 710 4558. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed **and approved** by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee

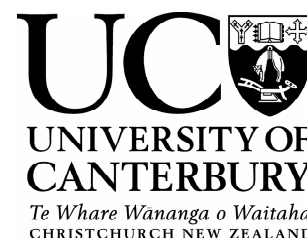
## APPENDIX TWO

### College of Arts

School of Social and Political Sciences

Tel: +64 3 364 2899, Fax: + 64 364 2414

Web site: <http://www.saps.canterbury.ac.nz/>



### INFORMATION SHEET (PARTICIPANTS)

#### Support Experiences in Aranui and Sumner in Response to the Christchurch Earthquakes

You are invited to participate as a subject in the research project entitled *Support Experiences in Aranui and Sumner in Response to the Christchurch Earthquakes*. Thank-you for your willingness to be contacted regarding this study.

The aim of this project is to illuminate the personal experiences of residents of Aranui/Sumner, how they interacted with different people and organisations to meet their needs and those of others following the Christchurch earthquakes.

Your involvement in this project will be through 1 interview, which will be recorded and transcribed. Participation is entirely voluntary, but it does present an opportunity to have your experiences recorded so that we may learn how to better understand how meaningful support is provided and received following a large-scale event such as the Christchurch earthquakes. The expected length of time for the interviews is 1 hours. Once the interviews have been transcribed by Sarah Yanicki, copies can be emailed or posted to you. At this point you will have thirty days to correct and make any requests regarding omissions or changes. If you do not return the transcript within thirty days it will be assumed that you are content for it to be published in that form. The transcript will be copy-edited before printing, so the emphasis here is more on making factual amendments (names, dates, spelling) than on correcting grammar.

You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any information provided.

The results of the project will be published as a Masters thesis, which is a public document via the University of Canterbury library database, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality – if you do agree to an oral interview – there will be opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and to specify sections you wish to keep confidential. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, interviews, recorded data and transcriptions will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet, within a locked office in the Psychology Building at the University of Canterbury.

The project is being carried out by Sarah Yanicki, with the supervision of Richard Vokes, [richard.vokes@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:richard.vokes@canterbury.ac.nz), and Lyndon Fraser [lyndon.fraser@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:lyndon.fraser@canterbury.ac.nz), both from the University of Canterbury. Sarah can be contacted at 027 710 4558. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

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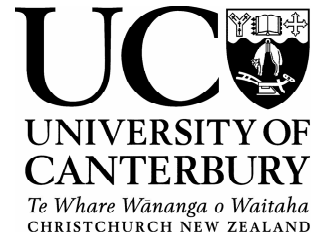
## APPENDIX THREE

### College of Arts

School of Social and Political Sciences

Tel: +64 3 364 2899, Fax: + 64 364 2414

Web site: <http://www.saps.canterbury.ac.nz/>



Date

Postal address of interviewee

Tel:

Dear X,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in an interview for the *Social Support Networks and Processes in Aranui/Sumner in Response to the Christchurch Earthquakes* project. I am really looking forward to recording our session on [insert date] at [insert time]. I anticipate that the interview will last between one and two hours. To help you prepare, I have enclosed a written list of topics I intend to cover.

I would be very grateful if you could fill out an interview consent form before the interview (leave aside the signature until we have completed the interview). This will be archived together with the digital files and the transcripts. I will collect them on [insert date of interview].

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the interview. My contact details are given below.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Yanicki  
MA student  
School of Social and Political Sciences  
University of Canterbury  
Private Bag 4800  
Christchurch  
NEW ZEALAND

Tel: 027 710 4558

Email: [sarah.yanicki@pg.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:sarah.yanicki@pg.canterbury.ac.nz)

## APPENDIX FOUR

### Interviewee Demographic Sheet

*Support Experiences in Aranui and Sumner Following the Christchurch Earthquakes*

Note: To protect anonymity and confidentiality, please **DO NOT** write your name on this sheet.

*Participant Code:*

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Sex (please tick):

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. *Marital Status* (please tick):

- ☐ Married (not separated)
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Never married
- ☐ De facto

4. *Ethnicity* (please circle all that apply)

New Zealand European                      Maori                      Pacific: \_\_\_\_\_

Asian: \_\_\_\_\_                      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the highest level of qualification you have completed? If currently enrolled, please circle the previous qualification received.

Some secondary school      Secondary school qualification      Post-school certificate

Post-school diploma              Bachelor's degree              Post-graduate qualification

6. *Employment Status*

Are you currently...?

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Not in the labour force
- ☐ Retired

7. *Annual household income:*

- ☐ Less than \$10, 000
- ☐ \$10, 001 - \$20, 000
- ☐ \$20, 001 - \$30, 000
- ☐ \$30, 001 - \$50, 000
- ☐ \$50, 001 - \$70, 000
- ☐ \$70, 001 - \$100, 000
- ☐ \$100, 001 and above

# APPENDIX FIVE

## Key Informant Interview Guide

### History of Organisation

When did [name of organization] start?

Why was [name of organization] established?

How long has [name of organization] provided services in [Sumner/Aranui]?

Do you provide services only in [Aranui/Sumner] or do you also work in other areas?

### Functioning of Organisation Prior to Earthquakes

Can you describe the types of services you offered in [Sumner/Aranui] prior to the earthquakes?

Why were these particular services provided?

How did [name of organization] connect with [clients/members]?

How is [name of organization] funded?

Does funding affect the types of services [name of organization] is able to provide?

If yes, how?

Does [name of organization] have working relationships with any other organisations or government agencies? If yes, which ones?

Can you give me some examples of how your relationships with other organizations/agencies assist [name of organization] in service provision?

### Functioning of Organisation Post-earthquakes

Can you describe the types of services you offered in [Sumner/Aranui] following the earthquakes?

How have you connect with [clients/members] following the earthquakes?

What kinds of needs did you identify among clients following the earthquakes?

How did you identify these needs? How did you try to meet these needs?

Thinking about the needs of clients, is there a clear distinction between pre-earthquake needs and post-earthquake needs?

How have the earthquakes changed the way [name of organization] functions?

# APPENDIX SIX

## Participant Interview Guide

### Biographical/Household details

Name?

Length of residence in Aranui?

Name, age, and relationship of people living in household?

### Scoping Questions

How did the earthquakes affect you and others who lived here?

What issues did you have to cope with immediately following the earthquakes?

What issues have you had to cope with in the months since the earthquakes?

### Social Networks

#### 1. Neighbourhood

a) Are there people in this neighbourhood that you have contact with from time to time (by phone, mail/email, or in person)?

b) Thinking about those people that you have contact with, can you tell me if there are people here that have been important to you in one way or another in recovering from the earthquakes? (I mean, people who you have turned to for any help following the earthquakes, or to get information or advice about something, or perhaps when you needed someone to talk to [etc.])

c) Who are these people?

d) Could you please give me their first names?

#### 2. Relatives

a) Are you in contact with any of your relatives from time to time (by phone, mail/email, or in person)? These can be relatives of any age (on either side of the family).

b) Thinking about the relatives that you have contact with, can you tell me if there are relatives that have been important to you in one way or another in recovering from the earthquakes?

[Repeat questions c-d for 'relatives']

#### 3. Work/at School

[Repeat questions a-d for 'people at work and/or at school']

#### 4. Others

a) Are there people that you are in contact with that don't fit neatly into one of the areas we've already discussed? How do you know them?

[Repeat questions b-d]

How do you feel about the part the people on your list played or still play in helping you meet these needs?

Thinking about advice or information you have needed as a result of the earthquakes.

Did you turn to anyone for help in this area?

Did anyone turn to you for this kind of support?

If you were running short on anything following the earthquakes (i.e. food, water, blankets, etc.). Did you turn to anyone for help in this area? Did anyone turn to you for this kind of support?

5. Organisations

- a) Do you belong to any group or organization?
- b) Could you tell me which ones? Also, could you describe what kind of group that is?
- c) Have you turned to any non-government community organisations for help since the earthquakes? (These can be non-profit organizations, churches, etc.)
- d) Which local community organisations have you turned to?
- e) Can you give me some examples of how [NGO/CBO] have helped you?
- f) How did you find out about the assistance/services they provide?
- g) Tell me about your experiences with [NGO/CBO].
- h) How do you feel about the part [NGO/CBO] has played in helping you meet your needs since the earthquake?
- i) Besides getting support, in what other ways have you been involved with local community organizations since the earthquake?
- j) How did you become involved in [NGO/CBO]
- k) Why did you become involved in [NGO/CBO]

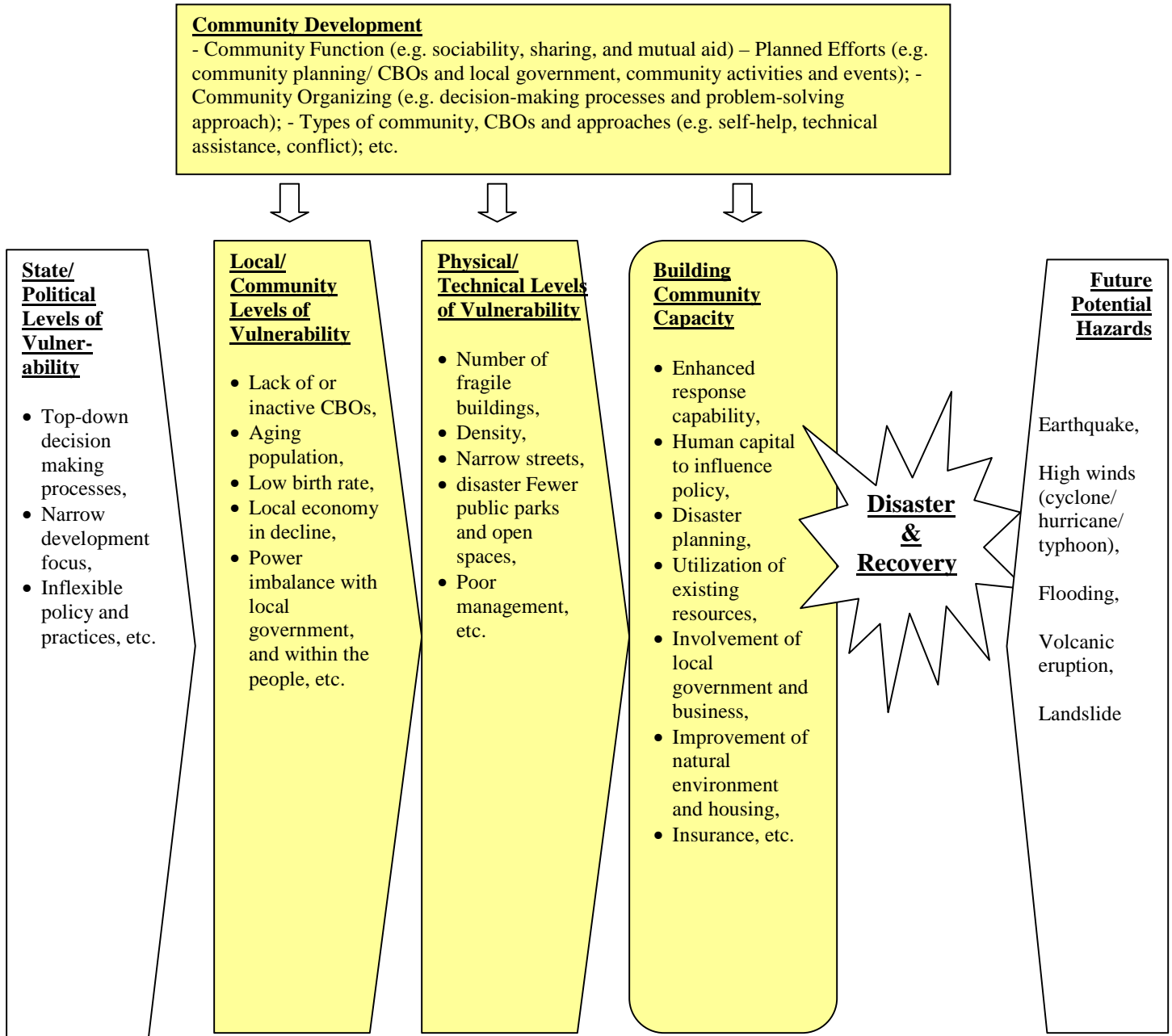
6. Government

- a) Have you turned to any government agency for help since the earthquakes?
- b) Which government agencies have you turned to?
- c) Can you give me some examples of how [government agency] has helped you?
- d) How did you find out about the assistance/services [government agency] provides?
- e) Tell me about your experiences with [government agency].
- f) How do you feel about the part [government agency] has played in helping you meet your needs since the earthquake?



## APPENDIX SEVEN

### Yasui's (2007) Community Vulnerability and Capacity Model



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